



Public Utilities Committee

Water Billing Concerns Update

October 21, 2015

Customer Service Update

High Bill Calls & Escalations

- Since August, the Contact Center has received 10,877 high bill concerns
 - 27% increase to call handle time in order to review customer usage, checklists, explanation of process, and a 40% increase in escalations to Center Supervisors
 - Call volumes have peaked and are declining
- High Bill Escalations beyond Initial Contact
 - Since August, over 2,400 escalations through AE and 256 with Austin Water
 - 2,100 resolved and closed

PUC Meeting Citizen Outreach

- Update on citizens who spoke at last meeting
- Greenslopes
 - 113 homes receiving water from a 4” water meter
 - Meter was installed in June 2015 and tested for accuracy in September
 - Austin Water crews performed leak detection on private lines & hydrants
 - Initial Review - No leaks were discovered but several valves were buried
 - Follow Up Work – Buried valves recovered and leak source discovered
- Austin Water reached out to other citizens who spoke
 - Investigated their specific issues and communicated findings

Irrigation Audits

- Irrigation audit stats – August to Current
 - Number completed: 144
 - Scheduled through November: 159
- Audit results and examples
 - 83% of audited systems were set with multiple day, multiple start times, and/or excessive run times
 - Irrigation water use for systems with excessive day and/or run time settings average 384% of recommended irrigation levels
 - Examples include the potential in some cases to use 100,000 – 300,000 gallons in one month

Irrigation Audits – First 20 Completed

Zip Code	Date	Current Controller Schedule	Current Setting Potential Gallons Used	Recommended Setting Usage in Gallons	% ABOVE/ BELOW Recommend	Reduction Recommend
78717	7/28/2015	Multiple start times	22,291	6,467	245%	Yes
78739	8/5/2015	Multiple days	21,930	5,323	312%	Yes
78731	8/10/2015	Multiple start/excessive run times	33,712	7,620	342%	Yes
78759	8/10/2015	Multiple days/start times	45,580	9,795	365%	Yes
78660	8/11/2015	Multiple days	340,456	3,397	9922%	Yes
78746	8/11/2015	Unable to verify scheduling	14,995	11,266	33%	Yes
78730	8/12/2015	Multiple days/Excessive run times	36,791	11,008	234%	Yes
78739	8/17/2015	Manage seasonally	14,199	14,199	0%	Target
78739	8/18/2015	High operating system pressure	8,836	11,520	-23%	Conserving
78739	8/19/2015	High operating system pressure	4,068	3,354	21%	Yes
78717	8/20/2015	Excessive run times	16,701	10,681	56%	Yes
78750	8/20/2015	Excessive run times	195,415	7,000	2692%	Yes
78746	8/24/2015	Multiple start times	53,372	17,174	211%	Yes
78747	8/26/2015	Multiple days/start times	14,836	7,043	111%	Yes
78730	8/31/2015	Unable to verify scheduling	10,406	10,406	0%	Target
78730	9/1/2015	Excessive run times	11,653	7,783	50%	Yes
78731	9/2/2015	Good condition	6,708	6,708	0%	Target
78739	9/2/2015	Excessive run times	76,303	8,084	844%	Yes
78746	9/8/2015	Multiple days/start times	3,595	1,600	125%	Yes
78751	9/8/2015	Multiple start times/excessive run times	61,920	3,509	1665%	Yes

Irrigation Systems & Pools

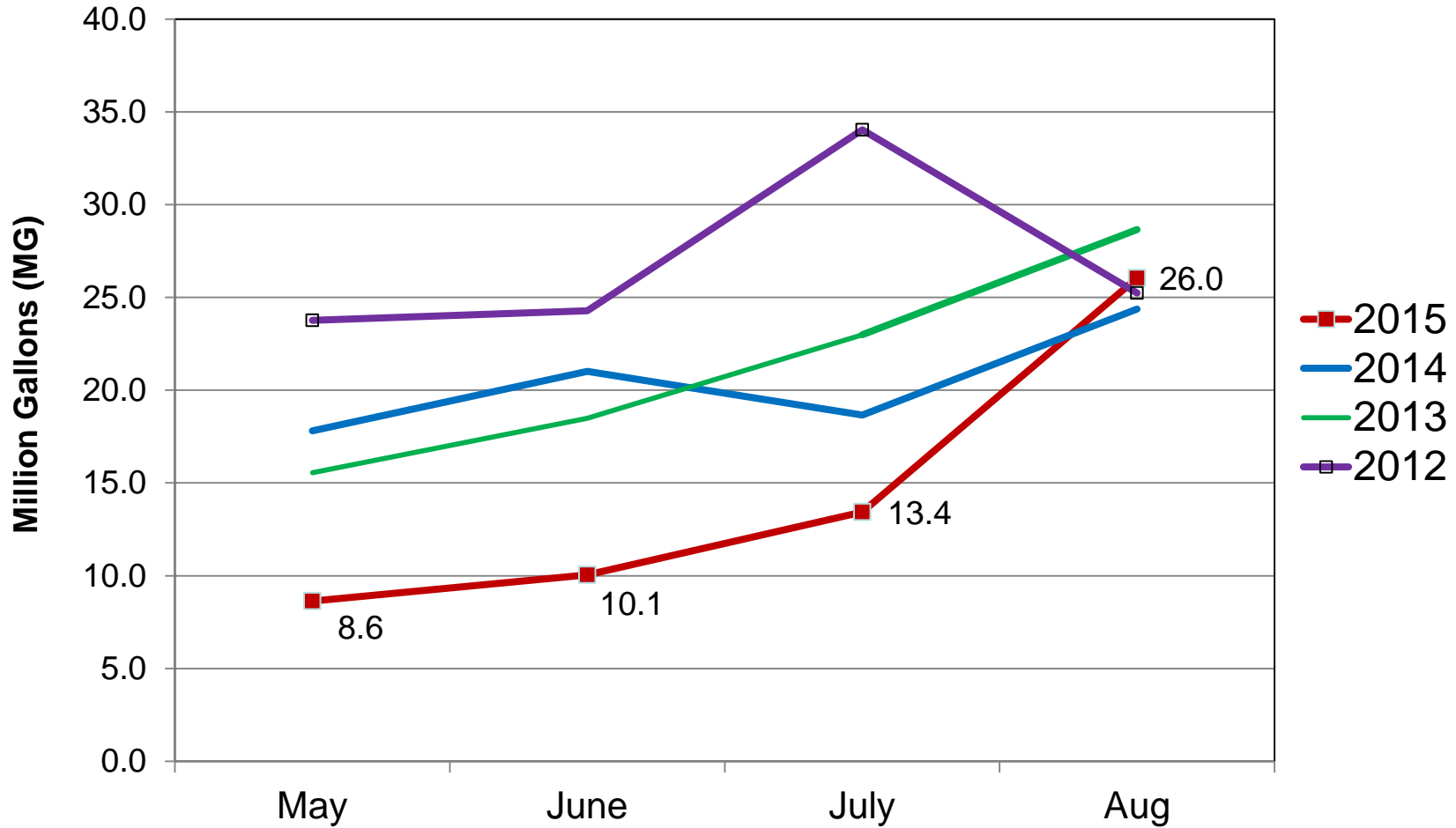
- Sampling of Austin Water Bill Escalations
 - Subset of bill escalations asked whether they had an irrigation system or pool
 - 141 customer sample with escalations were polled
 - 121 (86%) of these customers had irrigation systems
 - Out of the 121 with irrigation systems one third of these customers also had pools

Updated Systematic Checks

Pumpage vs. Consumption Checks

- Riverplace results presented at the September PUC
- Lost Creek analysis completed
- Austin Water system completed

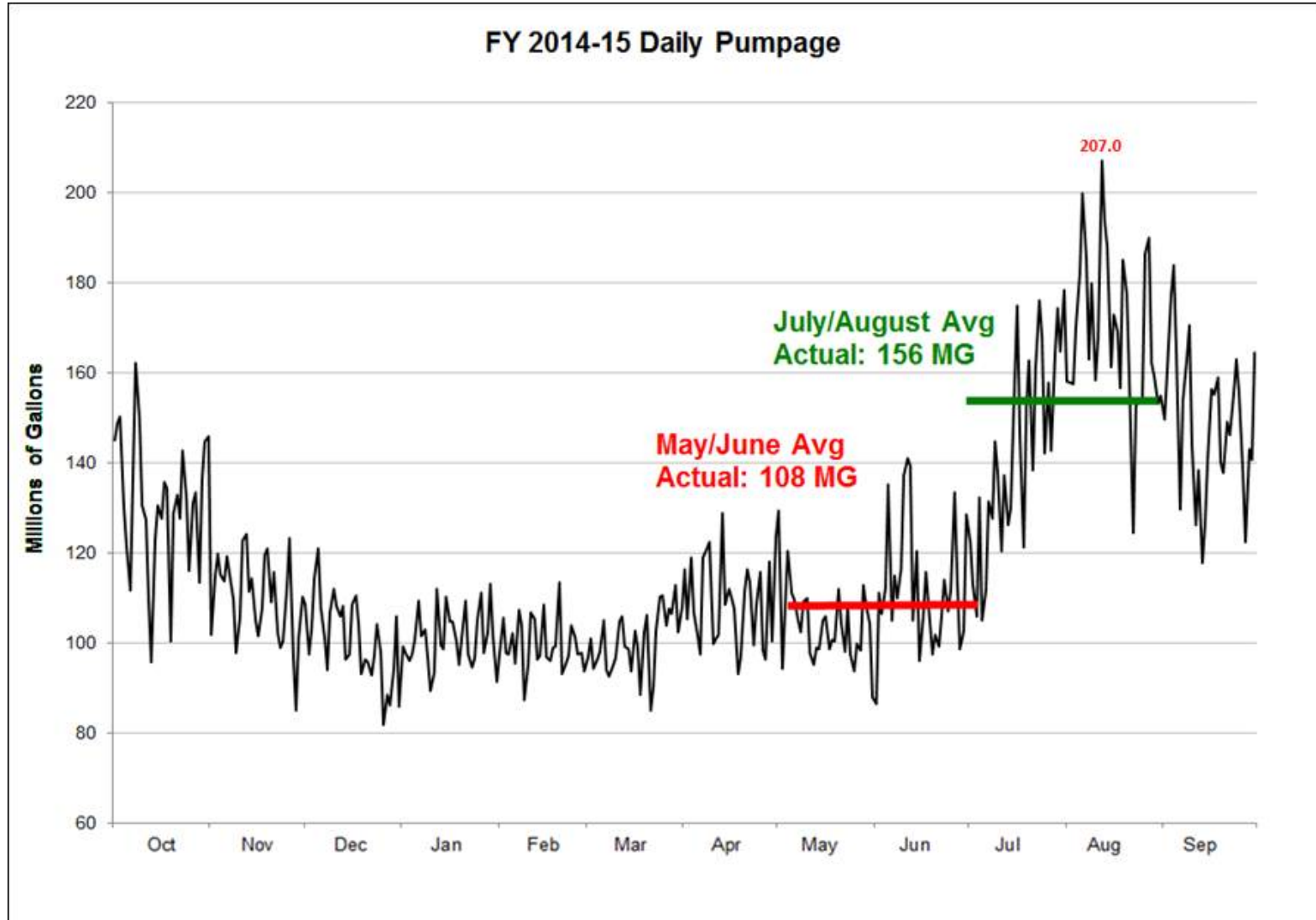
Lost Creek MUD Historical Summer Consumption



Lost Creek Consumption Master Meter vs. Customer Meter

- Master meter from former MUD still being read
 - Aggregate of all consumption for Lost Creek area
 - Comparison of master meter data with the individual customer metered consumption
- August 2015 – customer metered consumption was 96.6% of the master meter water that was delivered to the Lost Creek system

FY 2015 Austin Daily Pumpage



System Pumpage vs. Consumption

- Results of system wide pumpage vs. customer metered consumption for August 2015
 - Total metered consumption is 88% of same period pumpage
 - Consistent with expectations and prior years

Metering Processes

Meter Read Process

- Corix, a contracted third party, provides the first level of meter read
 - Meter readers assigned routes tied to 20 billing cycles/month
 - System does not allow meter readers to see prior reads
 - Preprogrammed parameters prompt meter reader to validate high or low reads
- Reads are validated through Austin Energy internal quality review
 - Recent quarterly results showed a 97.5% accuracy rate in the read process
 - The remaining 2.5% of reads are handled through our standard re-read process
- Austin Energy further verifies read accuracy as they help validate high or low reads through the re-read process
 - The re-read process also shows 97% accuracy of initial read

Meter Re-read Process

- The re-read process helps validate any out of range reads
 - Billing generates a bill for the customer with the validated usage
 - A field order is created to proactively identify any leaks
- However, meter or location conditions may prevent success obtaining a valid read
 - If meter is initially unreadable, a series of field activities escalate the read process
 - If meter equipment issue exists, AWU meter technicians will replace or repair the meter
 - If meter is still inaccessible, the billing system estimates a read based on historical consumption

Bill Estimation

- Less than 1% of water bills are estimated on a monthly basis
- Why is a bill estimated?
 - If a valid meter read cannot be obtained, billing system algorithm reviews historical usage patterns and calculates an estimation
 - Estimation process is important tool to help to ensure customers receive a timely monthly bill
- How is an estimated bill resolved?
 - Once a valid meter read is obtained, the estimated bill is appropriately rebilled across the correct billing months
 - Unusual weather or pronounced changes in usage patterns between years may result in high or low estimations

Conclusions / Next Steps

- Austin Energy and Austin Water continuing joint effort to work through high bill matters
- Billing system and meter system functioning properly
- Irrigation audits providing customers valuable feedback on optimizing outdoor water use
- AE billing system audit RFQ underway
 - RFQ closes 10/23/15
 - 4 week deliverable once contract initiated

Questions?

Regional Issue

Other Cities Experience

- Similar experiences in other cities
 - Cedar Park
 - Round Rock
 - San Antonio
 - Dallas Area
- Cedar Park
 - Several conversations with City Manager on high bill issues
 - Provided leak and high bill adjustment policies and procedures