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***President's Message – A Persistent Leak***

*Charles Eley, August 31, 2026*

Every day our distribution operator, Reuel Miller, visits our wells and treatment plant and records (1) the amount of water being produced by each of our three wells, (2) how much water is pumped up to our storage tanks (the "six pack"), and (3) how much water enters our distribution system on its way to you. When I joined the Board in late-2023, we set up an online relational database and began analyzing this information. What we discovered was that there was a significant difference between the amount of water that left our wells and what was pumped up to the storage tanks. In 2024, our wells produced about 2.1 million gallons but only about 1.6 million gallons made it into storage – a half a million gallons or 22% of our well water was lost somewhere along the way. In 2025 our losses were even worse. Some losses are normal, but these losses were extraordinary.

Reuel and our treatment operator, Weeks Drilling, were at a loss to explain the discrepancy. Their best explanation was that the meters were wildly out of calibration. They reasoned that if we were losing this much water, there would be patches of green in the summer as the ground was irrigated. We continued to monitor the data in 2026. About mid-year, we installed a temporary meter to measure how much water from wells #2 and #3 actually made it to the treatment plant. The findings were shocking. A total of about 1,600 gpd (gallons per day) were leaving the two wells, but only 300 gpd were making it to the treatment plant.

The next week, in mid-June 2026, a crew carefully followed the path of the waterline from well #2 to the treatment plant. We found and repaired the leak; it was in a wooded area near the creek. For years, we had been pumping water from our deep wells and most of it was flowing back into Salmon Creek. Losses were roughly 1,300 gpd. The impact was remarkable. Prior to the leak repair, during the month of May and the first half of June, we needed to haul in 12 loads of water from Sebastopol (39,600 gallons) at a cost of $4,560. Following repair of the leak, we went for six weeks in the middle of the summer without having to haul any water.

But in the last week of July, things changed. In July and August, we needed to haul in seven loads of water (23,100 gallons). This was the result of two factors. We had three consecutive leaks in our distribution system along Bodega Lane, but the more significant problem was that members were using more water. On several days in late July and early August, water consumption was almost double the normal rate and this was most likely due to members filling local storage tanks. Storage levels dropped abruptly and we had to haul in water to replenish supplies. The BWC Board is working on a policy to address this problem along with possible changes in the way we allocate water hauling charges.