

Office Manager's Report February 20, 2020

SDAO Conference

I attended sessions on risk management, HR, cyber security, ethics, and an update on the new labor laws. Well worth the time and expense to be there.

I also had the opportunity to visit with the other irrigation districts there about their assessment rates and late policies. Some had no increase for 2020 but were forecasting large increases in the next few years due to capital improvement projects. Others had a policy of increasing their assessments by a small percentage each year, either tied to the CPI or Cost of Living Adjustments, to account for the rising costs of operating the districts. The office staff all echoed the preference for small increases annually over no increases for a period of time, then a large increase all at once. It is much easier to work with the public, whose other expenses are going up by small percentages; it seems easier for them to budget that way. I echo this sentiment.

Assessments

Umatilla County was a little slow in getting their updates to me, so I am still working on verifying my database. That should be done by Wednesday. When I get the rates for 2020, it should only take me another week to get the bills out.

The shut-off list for landowners still owing from 2019 is long, as usual, with the power bills making up most of the list. I plan on putting an insert in with the bills informing these accounts that they cannot take water until they are current. We have done this for several years. It seems to be about 50/50 in the honest landowners not taking water on the honor system, and those who know they can get away with it. Those who owe beyond the power bill will get an actual shut off (time permitting).

RRA

Reclamation was very late getting forms out this year; they only arrived last Thursday. As soon as assessments go out, I will focus on this next. It looks like an early water year, so the forms have to be in earlier than any of us are used to. I have a good relationship with our larger landowners, and we all know what to expect now. I expect this to go smoothly.

Collections:

Linda Martinez: Regular payments are coming in from bankruptcy trustee.

Linda Lancaster: Landowner and lien holders have been notified of past due. Complaint has been filed with courts.