Stallion Springs Community Services District

Sewer Rate Study

May 2019

Prepared for: Stallion Springs Community Services District Tehachapi, California

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ABBREVIATIONS	and	ACRONYMS
ACWA	А	Association of California Water Agencies
ADF		average daily flow
BOD		biochemical oxygen demand
CF or cf		cubic foot
CIP	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	Capital Improvement Program
EDU		equivalent dwelling unit
FY		Fiscal Year
gpd		gallons per day
HCF		
1/1		infiltration and inflow
M&I		Municipal & Industrial
MG		million gallons
MGD		million gallons per day
O&M		Operations and Maintenance
RWQCB-CVR	Regional Water Qua	lity Control Board Central Valley Region
SSCSD	Stal	lion Springs Community Services District
SWRCB		State Water Resources Control Board
TSS		total suspended solids
WEF		Water Environment Federation

1 Introduction

Stallion Springs Community Services District (SSCSD or District) authorized W3i Engineering to conduct a review of sewer rates and make recommendations for rate adjustments to meet the current cost of service. The District provides sewer service to approximately 380 accounts consisting of residential and commercial customers. This rate study is intended to serve as the basis for Proposition 218 majority protest proceedings for sewer rate adjustments.

This rate study has been prepared in accordance with guidance provided under the Water Environment Federation (WEF) Manual of Practice (MOP) 27 Financing & Charges for Wastewater System, 4th Edition 2018. The rate study considers the sufficiency of the current rates to meet the financial requirements of operating a wastewater utility with the need for renewal and replacement of existing depreciated assets and with sufficient revenues and reserves to make emergency repairs and provide stable revenue. The rate study has been prepared using guidance documents published by ACWA and from League of California Cities for compliance with Proposition 218.

1.1 Proposition 218

In the State of California, utility rates charged by municipal agencies and public districts are governed by rules and procedures adopted and made part of the California State Constitution by the passage of Proposition 218, the "Right to Vote on Taxes Act" in November 1996. Proposition 218 is codified as Articles XIIIC and XIIID of the California Constitution. After over 20 years of practical experience and clarifying court decisions, the steps that each agency must follow have become legally clear. In 2007, the California Supreme Court clarified that Proposition 218 applies to all revenue-producing utilities, including water and sewer utilities. This report has been prepared in accordance with the rules and principles set forth in Proposition 218.

1.2 Procedural Requirements

The Stallion Springs CSD (SSCSD or the District) has authority to establish sewer rates sufficient to recover the costs of operating the enterprise, subject to a majority protest from the rate-payers. The procedure to set new or adjusted rates is as follows:

- Acceptance of this Sewer Rate Study Report and the recommendations herein. The report describes the reasons for proposed rate increases, anticipated costs, expected revenues and a schedule of proposed rates.
- Mailed Notices must be sent out to the recorded owner(s) of each parcel upon which the rates will be imposed and shall be determined from the last equalized property tax roll. There are specific requirements for the notices, which must include the reasons for the proposed increased rates, and the expected rates for the subject property. The notice must also state the date of the public hearing at which time the proposed rates will be considered and potentially adopted.
- The Public Hearing will include a public presentation of the material in the Engineer's Report and will again cover the reasons rate adjustments are needed. The public hearing must be at least 45 calendar days after the mailing of the public notices; in practice this usually means two months after the Board meeting when mailing of the notices is approved.

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- Consideration of Protest. Protest of the new rates by a majority of the property owners, in any combination of written responses and verbal protest at the public hearing, is sufficient to stop the proposed rate increase. A "majority" means 50 percent plus one of the affected property owners. So long as there is not a majority protest, the Board has legal authority to proceed with the proposed rate increases at its discretion. The District staff will compile the written and verbal protests and present a percentage of protesting owners to the Board at the conclusion of the Public Hearing.
- Approval of the Proposed Rates is by simple majority vote of the District Board, following the close of the public hearing. The vote may be at the same meeting as the hearing.
- Election Requirements Do Not Apply. Proposition 218 requires an actual vote of the property owners to approve certain rates and assessments. However, the courts have clarified that rate-setting for water, sewer and refuse collection is exempt from the election requirements so long as the ratesetting principles described in Section 1.3 are followed.

1.3 Principles for Establishing Rates Under Proposition 218

In addition to governing the procedures to actually adopt rates, Proposition 218 includes a number of well-defined principles that constrain what can and cannot be included in the rates. These rules are intended to assure that "utility revenue" is actually needed and used for provision of utility services. Proposition 218 made it clear that utility revenues from user rates are strictly limited to paying the costs of providing utility services, and that those rates must be charged in a way that is proportional to the cost of providing the services. The rules can be summarized as follows:

- Revenue Must Not Exceed Cost of Service. Agencies are required to calculate all the costs involved in providing service, including labor, benefits, materials, equipment, power, testing, outside services, debt repayment, and so forth. This can be a budget projection, but costs must be based on the record. For example, expected electric power cost must be based on was spent last year, adjusted by expected changes like increased or decreased number of users and changes in electric rates. Cost of services can include reasonable budgets for unexpected repairs and replacement of capital equipment. Such items are prudent management intended to assure there are funds available for items which can be expected to be needed but for which the timing is unknown or difficult to specify, like replacement of broken or worn-out equipment.
- Revenues Must Be Expended for the Specified Purpose. Simply, money collected from sewer rates must be expended to provide sewer service. It cannot be transferred to the water department, or to any other department, except as those departments may assist in work needed to provide water service.
- Revenue Collected Must Be Proportional to Cost of Service. This principle was originally intended to prohibit shifting utility costs from one class of user to another. For example, commercial sewer rates cannot be increased in order to decrease residential rates, or vice-versa. A 2015 court decision added to this principle by effectively barring rising-tier rate structures, where a base amount of water (or sewer) is available at a lower cost with higher use being charged at increasingly-high rates. However, the court said such rate structures are permissible if the utility can demonstrate that there are higher costs associated with the higher usage rates per user.

The rates proposed in this Study are intended to conform with these mandatory principles, leading to full cost recovery for utility services while charging for these services in a fair and proportional manner.

1.4 Methodology

The methods used to establish utility rates are based on principles that are commonly used in the wastewater utility industry. These principles are designed to produce rates that equitably recover costs from each class of customer by setting the appropriate level of revenue to be collected. The primary tasks of this rate study are as follows:

- Revenue Requirements Analysis This analysis identifies the total revenue requirement to be recovered from the sewer rates, considering operating and maintenance expenses, a capital improvement program, satisfying bond covenants, and meeting the District's policy objectives.
- □ Cost of Service Analysis and Rate Design The purpose of this task is to allocate of the revenue requirements and to customers based on their proportionate demand and use of the system.
- □ Rate Design This task involves the development of a rate structure that produces the revenue for sound District fiscal operations, while achieving rate equity.

2 Background

2.1 Wastewater Service

The District provides wastewater collection and treatment service to a portion of the District as shown in Figure 2-1. The Sewer Rate Study applies only to those lots receiving sewer service. The area receiving sewer service is generally located in the higher density, small lot and lower elevation portions of the District. Lower density, larger lots and higher elevation lots utilize privately owned septic systems with on-site leach field disposal. The sewer system includes collection sewers, pump stations and wastewater treatment facilities. Generally, sewer house laterals are privately owned from the public right of way to the house and are maintained by the property owner.

2.2 Sewer Accounts

The District sewer customer accounts for the past three fiscal years (FY) are shown in Table 2-1. Commercial accounts are about 6 to 7 percent of the total active accounts. There are no industrial sewer dischargers in Stallion Springs. Sewer residential connections increased by seven between 2017 and 2018 and by eight between 2018 and February of 2019.

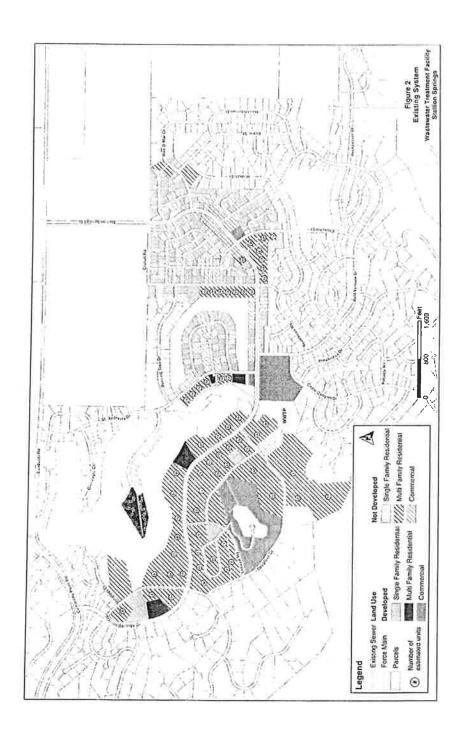
Sewer Accounts	May/June 2016	May/June 2017	May/June 2018	Jan/Feb 2019
Residential - active	340	343	350	358
Commercial - active	24	24	22	22
Total active sewer	364	367	372	380
Total inactive accounts	7	7	6	5
Total Accounts	371	374	378	385

Table 2-1 Sewer Accounts

2.3 Wastewater Flow and Loading

The District is experiencing an increase in flow and loading as illustrated in Figure 2-2. Flow and loading increases as a result of new housing construction. Five new residential units were constructed in 2017/18 and nine so far in 2018/19. Flow is also increasing as a result of infiltration and inflow (I/I) into the sewer collection system that occurs during wet weather. As collection sewers and manholes age, increased leakage occurs. The net result is that the District incurs additional costs over time in pumping and treating flow and in maintaining the collection system to reduce I/I. The affect of wet weather is illustrated in Figure 2-2 in the winter months of 2017/18 where average flow nearly doubled.

Figure 2-1 Sewer Service Area



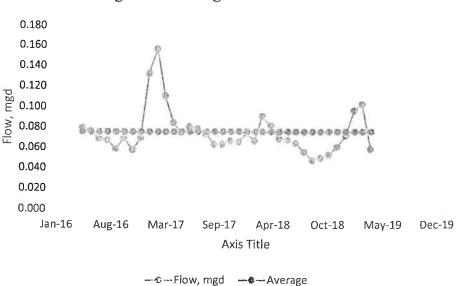


Figure 2-2 Average Wastewater Flow

2.4 Recommended Sewer System Improvements

No comprehensive wastewater system master plan has been prepared to identify costs of an upgraded system. The District has a long term vision of eliminating the current discharge of treated effluent to Chanac Creek and recycling the treated effluent for irrigation. The discharge to surface water (Chanac Creek) requires an NPDES permit which has much higher water quality standards than would be required for discharge to land. It also subjects the District to greater liability as there are mandatory penalties for discharge violations.

Two studies have been completed preliminarily identifying needed improvements to the wastewater system. A report, prepared by Carollo Engineers in 2005, identified deficiencies in the wastewater treatment plant. The report is outdated, and cost estimates are not current. A technical memorandum, prepared by Aquality in 2014, provided some recommendations for improvements, including the addition of tertiary filters. However, it was a very preliminary report, prepared by a wastewater vendor, and did not provide cost estimates.

A Capacity Fee Review was completed by Provost & Pritchard in 2016 to review and establish new water and sewer capacity fees. A Technical Memorandum prepared utilized information provided in the Aquality Report and other available studies to develop a preliminary list of needed wastewater improvements with estimated costs. Although the list was not a result of a detailed preliminary engineering analysis, it established, for the purpose of determining sewer impact fees, a total wastewater project capital improvement cost of \$2.8 million. See Table 4 in Appendix A. Some of the projects listed have been completed or are in progress. Some of the aeration basin improvements have been completed and the wastewater lift station improvement are in progress, with funding in-place. Projects yet to be started and currently unfunded amount to an estimated total of about \$2.3 million.

3.2 Revenue from Existing Rates

Revenue and expenses for the Fiscal Year (FY) 17/18 and projected FY 18/19 for the sewer fund is shown in summary in Table 3-2 below. A detailed line item account, showing all fund categories, is included in Appendix C.

Table 3-2 Sewer Fund Income/Expense Summary

herrifestym uterrat familiae ac ei franchi	FY 17/18	FY 18/19
sine lessous as agained point course.	Actual	Projected
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
4427 · Sewer Service Charge	253,544.80	238,700.00
4431 · Sewer Connection Fees	7,500.00	18,875.00
4435 · Sewer Capacity Fees	24,680.00	57,530.00
4500 · Miscellaneous Revenue	12,375.13	12,743.56
Total Income	298,099.93	327,848.56
Expense	00.000.44	
Total 5100 · Personnel Expenses	99,098.44	108,372.33
Total 5200 · General & Administrative	7,137.41	13,643.97
Total 5300 * Utilities	11,841.24	14,525.16
Total 5400 · Rolling Stock & Equipment	2,666.45	3,091.91
Total 5500 · Supplies, Chemicals	20,829.93	24,773.24
Total 5600 · Outside Services, Lab, Eng.	78,323.02	70,080.24
6015 · Depreciation Expense	12,423.00	18,634.50
Total Expense	232,319,49	253,121.34
7100 · Administration Allocation	26,121.27	24,214.76
Total 8000 · Capital Expenses		94,995.82
Net Income/Loss	39,659.17	-44,483.36

FY 17/18 had a "profit" (surplus) of \$39,659 (unaudited). FY 18/19 is projected to have a "loss" (deficit) of \$44,500. There are two major differences between FY 17/18 and 18/19. First, on the revenue side, FY 18/19 had significantly greater revenue from connection and capacity fees totaling \$76,405 (vs \$32,189 in FY 17/18). These are one time fees paid for new construction and depend almost entirely upon the new residential housing market. Revenue from capacity and connection fees will vary from year to year and are not a reliable source of income. The second difference is that the District initiated two major capital projects with capital

expense projected at about \$95,000 for FY 18/19. One project was the video inspection and cleaning of collection sewers to determine the condition of the sewers in order to develop a plan for correcting infiltration and inflow (I/I) into the sewers. The second project is the replacement of the wastewater pump station. The sewer video inspection is funded by reserves. The pump station project will be financed through an CA Infrastructure & Economic Development Bank (IBank) loan already obtained by the District. If there are insufficient funds in the current year, any deficit in the fund balance will be paid with accumulated reserves.

As shown in Table 3-2, costs for personnel, utilities, supplies and nearly all funds are increasing year to year. The District also has a need to expend significant funds for maintenance/repair of existing facilities, correction of infiltration and inflow into sewers, preliminary engineering and planning studies for land disposal and capital improvements to implement recycling of wastewater effluent and eliminating the NPDES discharge to surface water. Without a rate adjustment, the sewer fund will continue to operate in deficit and no new capital improvement projects can be undertaken once reserves are depleted.

Prior FY budgets did not include a renewal and replacement budget (hereinafter called and O&M Reserve fund). The District has not developed an adequate plan to fund renewal and replacement of its aging infrastructure. Most of the existing sewer collection system and wastewater treatment facilities were constructed in the early 1970s and are now over 40 years old.

3.3 Revenue Requirements

Ideally, the total sewer revenue generated each year from the customer rates should be approximately equal to the total sewer fund expenditures planned for that year. The revenue should also include long-term financial objectives such as capital improvement and renewal/replacement projects in addition to regular operations and maintenance. The revenue should provide for reserve funds to be used in emergencies or during periods of low cash flow. With these basic principles, the required revenue can be projected and then rates can be designed to meet the revenues needed. The following sections describe the assumptions that have been made for determining the required revenue for SSCSD.

3.4 Projected Sewer Fund Expenditures

The baseline operating expenses were based on the projected expenditures that occurred in FY 18/19 as shown in Table 3-2.

Using the historical expenses, a projection of the expenses and required revenues for FY 19/20 through FY 23/24 was prepared as shown in Table 3-3. The assumptions used to project future sewer expenses are:

- 1. Assignment of a new half-time operator/maintenance worker for the wastewatertreatment plant/collection system. The system currently operates with one operator.
- 2. Inclusion of principal and interest payment (debt service) on the loan for the Wastewater Pump Station Reconstruction of about \$28,000 annually on a \$510,000 IBank Note.
- 3. Inclusion of <u>an allowance</u> for loan repayment for a 30 year, \$2,000,000, 4 percent interest loan to fund long-term improvements to the wastewater collection and treatment system. The debt service will be approximately \$115,000 annually. This new debt service is proposed to be phased in over three years. The first year will include \$22,000 with a Year 2 increase to \$77,000 and Year 3 increase to the fulldebt service of \$115,000.
- 4. Inclusion of an O&M reserve of \$40,000 to fund renewal and replacements on an ongoing basis. The typical minimum industry recommendation for an O&M reserve is 15% of a district's annual O&M expenses, which is recommended in this study (25% is the upper end of the industry recommended

- reserve). This fund category will be combined with depreciation because depreciation expense provides funds for replacement of fully depreciated structures and equipment. Because depreciation is already included in sewer expense at about \$18,500, this represents a \$21,500 increase.
- 5. Inflationary expenses beginning in Year 1 of 10 percent for personnel, energy and chemical costs and 3 percent each year thereafter for inflationary increases
- 6. The addition of an average five new residential services per year.
- 7. Commercial accounts are projected to remain as is in 2019.
- 8. Revenues should exceed expenses so that a reasonable reserve can be built overtime.

Table 3-3 Projected Sewer Fund Revenue/Expenses

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	FY 19/20	FY 20/21	FY 21/22	FY 22/23	FY 23/24
Ordinary Income/Expense					
Income					
4427 · Sewer Service Charge					
Residential	302,563.97	358,665.68	403,068.62	418,404.53	434,167.22
Commercial	90,711.03	106,049.62	117,559.33	120,396.39	123,279.59
4431 · Sewer Connection Fees	9,375.00	9,375.00	9,375.00	9,375.00	9,375.00
4435 · Sewer Capacity Fees	30,850.00	30,850.00	30,850.00	30,850.00	30,850.00
4500 · Miscellaneous Revenue	12,500.00	12,500.00	12,500.00	12,500.00	12,500.00
Total Income	446,000.00	517,440.30	573,352.95	591,525.92	610,171.81
Expense					
Expense Total 5100 · Personnel Expenses	152 400 00	150 (00 00	101.000.00	100 500 00	105 200 00
Total 5200 · General & Administrative	173,400.00 15,000.00	178,600.00	184,000.00	189,500.00	195,200.00 17,000.00
Total 5300 · Utilities	,	15,500.00	16,000.00	16,500.00	,
Total 5400 · Rolling Stock & Equipment	16,000.00	16,500.00	17,000.00	17,500.00	18,000.00
* * *	3,400.00	3,500.00	3,600.00	3,700.00	3,800.00
Total 5000 · Supplies, Chemicals	27,300.00	28,100.00	28,900.00	29,800.00	30,700.00
Total 5600 · Outside Services, Lab, Eng. 6015 · Depreciation/Renewal	77,100.00	79,400.00	81,800.00	84,300.00	86,800.00
Replacement	40,000.00	41.200.00	42,400.00	43,700.00	45,000.00
Total Expense	352,200.00	362,800.00	373,700.00	385,000.00	396,500.00
7100 · Administration Allocation	31,300.00	32,200.00	33,200.00	34,200.00	35,200.00
Total 8000 · Capital Expenses/Debt Service	50,000.00	105,000.00	143,000.00	143,000.00	143,000.00
Total Expense	433,500.00	500,000.00	549,900.00	562,200.00	574,700.00
Net Profit/Loss	12,500.00	17,440.30	23,452.95	29,325.92	35,471.81
Cumulative Reserve	12,500.00	29,940.30	53,393.25	82,719.17	118,190.98

4 Rate Design

4.1 Introduction

It is recommended that the current rate structure be retained and that rate increases be applied to all residential and commercial accounts proportionally to current rates.

4.2 Sewer Revenue Model

The proposed sewer rates have been developed and modelled using a spreadsheet based on estimated expense for the next five years. The objective of the model is to test rates to determine if they will provide sufficient revenue to meet all expenses and provide a small reserve (profit) for unforeseen conditions. The rate model assumes five new sewer services each year. The assumption on the number of new connections are conservative to minimize impacts on revenue if growth does not occur. Connection fee revenue should be applied to debt repayment on improvement projects, not on operational expenses. Actual revenues will depend on factors outside the control of the District and thus future rates will need review and possible future adjustments.

4.3 Proposed Sewer Rates

The proposed sewer rates are shown in Table 4-1 for residential sewer service and in Table 4-2 for commercial sewer service. Rates are shown beginning in FY 19/20 and continue for four more years. The rates proposed for FY 19/20 will be implemented beginning in summer 2019. Rate increases for future years will be imposed at the discretion of the District Board of Directors and will be no more than what is recommended in this report and approved by the Board. The Board will have the option of skipping a year's rate increase or adjusting the rates to any level at or below the recommended rate. The future year's rate will be based on the financial performance of the sewer system enterprise.

Table 4-1 Proposed Residential Sewer Rates

Bimonthly Charges			
Year	Rate per Residence		
FY 19/20	\$140.86		
FY 20/21	164.68		
FY 21/22	182.55		
FY 22/23	186.95		
FY 23/24	191.43		

Table 4-2 Proposed	Commercial	Sewer	Rates
--------------------	------------	-------	-------

Year	Unit Charge	Per each Toilet	Per each Washing Machine	Per each Dishwasher	Per hp for ea. Garbage Disposal	Flow Exceeding 4000 CF, per 1000 CF
FY 19/20	\$21.08	\$39.86	\$60.94	\$60.94	\$60.94	\$39.83
FY 20/21	24.64	46.60	71.24	71.24	71.24	46.56
FY 21/22	27.31	51.66	78.97	78.97	78.97	51.62
FY 22/23	27.97	52.91	80.88	80.88	80.88	52.86
FY 23/24	28.64	54.17	82.82	82.82	82.82	54.13

4.4 Summary Financial Plan After Rate Adjustments

After applying the proposed rates in the financial model, a summary of revenues, expenses and reserves is shown in Table 3-3. The new rates will produce a small annual reserve in the sewer fund in Year 1 of less than 3 percent. Over a period of five years, the small surplus will build to about \$118,000, which will be available to fund renewals and replacements. Commercial accounts produce about 20 percent of the overall sewer revenues. Residential accounts produce about 68 percent. The remaining revenues come from connection fees and miscellaneous income.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Adjustments to Rate Schedule

It is recommended that the District adjust rates for FY 19/20 as presented in Tables 4-1 and 4-2. If adopted following Proposition 218 procedures, the total bimonthly sewer bill for a typical single family residential will be \$140.86 (\$70.43/month). The bimonthly sewer bill under current rates is \$85.48.

It is further recommended that the Board of Directors review the financial performance of the sewer enterprise fund each year and, at their discretion, adjust rates as needed to meet increased expenses. The rates may not exceed those presented in Tables 4-1 and 4-2 for each fiscal year. The Board may recapture rate increases in a subsequent year if the increase was not accounted for in the prior year.

Other miscellaneous sewer fees, not subject to Proposition 218 majority protest proceedings, should be reviewed and adjusted annually based on a cost of service study. These miscellaneous fees include capacity fees, connection fees, encroachment permits and similar fees.

5.2 Implementation Plan

The proposed rate increase is a property related fee and thus must be implemented in accordance with the requirements of Proposition 218. The District's attorney should be consulted on the proper procedures, notices, ordinances and resolutions necessary to adopt and implement the proposed rate increases. The general implementation plan is as follows:

- 1. District Board of Directors (and District attorney) reviews and accepts this report and its recommendations.
- 2. The Board sets a date for a public protest hearing not less than 45 days after notices to customers have been mailed.
- 3. The District mails customer notices showing the proposed rate increase and time and date of the public protest hearing as well as any other required notice information as specified in Government Code Section 53753.
- 4. Hold public majority protest hearing. The protest hearing can be held at a regular Board meeting.
- 5. Determine if there is majority protest, and if not,
- 6. Adopt revised rate structure by majority vote of the Board of Directors. Rates will go into effect beginning in summer 2019 depending on the date set for the protest hearing.
- 7. Review revenue versus expenditures annually to verify assumptions and projections in Sewer Rate Study. Consider adjusting sewer rates if appropriate, based on this review.
- 8. Conduct Sewer Rate Study update in FY 23/24

Appendix A

Wastewater Improvements

From: Technical Memorandum, July 6, 2016, Water and Wastewater Capacity Fee Review, Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group.

Table 4 – Wastewater Improvements

Cost Subtotal Engineering & Administration Administration Contingency Total Project Cost 20% 10% 20% Cost 20% 20% S450,000 \$450,000 \$450,000 \$450,000 \$450,000 \$450,000 \$121.55 \$121.55 \$121.25 \$122.	Subtotal Engineering & Administration Administration Contingency Total Contingency \$300,000 \$60,000 \$30,000 \$60,000 \$121.506 \$24.301 \$12.151 \$24.301 \$0 \$0 \$0 \$0 \$121.506 \$16.000 \$16.000 \$16.000 \$174.000 \$15.000 \$115.000 \$115.000 \$194,324 \$38,865 \$19,432 \$38,865 \$200,000 \$40,000 \$20,000 \$40,000 \$210,000 \$42,000 \$21,000 \$42,000
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