



July 31, 2008

Dear Citizens of Paso Robles,

I write today not just as your Mayor, but as a concerned resident. As you know, an additional source of high quality water from Lake Nacimiento is on its way. While the need for this water has gone largely unquestioned, there has been controversy regarding the rate increase needed to cover the costs.

Many years ago, Paso Robles foresaw a time when water would become scarce, so we sought alternatives we could own and count on for years to come. For twenty years, we looked at options including desalination, reclamation, conservation, State Water, building new reservoirs, and trying to appropriate more from the Salinas River. In the end, the first, best alternative is Nacimiento water.

I think most would agree the water is not the issue; cost is the issue. I fully understand -- an increase in utility rates is unwelcome news even in the best of times, and in this economy, it's even more unwanted. That is why we have undertaken this issue with the utmost care and seriousness, doing everything possible to distribute costs fairly between existing residents and new construction. The difficult but necessary truth is that, just as we will all share the benefits of this water, we must also share the costs.

If the water rate proposal fails, we still have to pay for the water. This is because the contracts have been signed, and the bonds to finance the Project have been sold. So, whether or not rates increase, water will flow in 2010, and your City has a bill to pay. While this might sound fine to those opposed to any rate increases, "the City" is you -- redirecting "City" (your) funds would have very serious impacts on public services you enjoy. I am pretty sure you would find this an unacceptable alternative, and that is why I am writing to share my conviction that we must all pay our fair share for water.

I do wish that there were a simpler and cheaper way, but there isn't. Paso Robles has always been considered a "can do" community. We own our airport, landfill and library. Now we own our water. The proposed water rates pay for that ownership.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Mecham, Mayor