

## BACKGROUND

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In 1997, the developers of River Valley Ranch entered into a unique arrangement whereby the irrigation system for the golf course was designed and built to provide non-potable river water for the residential development. The arrangement was intended to be mutually beneficial by providing below-market water rates for the residents while providing an opportunity for the golf course owner to share its costs over a larger user base.

A Water Rights Agreement had been previously negotiated in 1996 with the Town of Carbondale which subsequently formed the basis of a three-party agreement entitled Water Delivery, Maintenance and Management Agreement, between the residential developer, the golf course owner and the home owners association. This agreement details the methods and procedures for establishing costs and rates to be billed by the golf owner to the irrigation customers.

As with any innovative endeavor there have been challenges along the way. The initial installation called for individual water meters for each customer site. This approach soon proved to be problematic. The high concentration of particulates in the river water tended to become caught in the impellers of the meters causing frequent failures.

A decision was made to remove the individual customer meters and to develop a billing system that utilized the properly functioning large master meters that measure the volume of water pumped to blocks or zones through out the subdivision. That decision was later ratified when the Homeowners Association Executive Board amended the Master Declaration in 2005. A billing system was devised to apportion the usage measured by the master meters to individual customers. This initial billing system was modeled on the basis of a complex and difficult to explain formula that took into account the customer's lot size, the amount of pervious surface, and an arcane metric used in the irrigation system's computer known as the evapo-transpiration rate.

Beginning 2005, the HOA board began an initiative to better understand the water system. That inquiry included a series of informational presentations and led to a number of recommendations from the Executive Board of the RVRMA. The most significant of these was a direction to revise the billing system to use a more transparent calculation for prorating the usage as measured by the master meters. In 2006, a new system was developed based on each billable lot's pervious surface, as a proxy for the area of each lot that residents would reasonably be expected to irrigate. Bills were issued for April, May and June of 2006. However this approach also proved to be problematic, primarily because of the difficulty in obtaining accurate data for each lot.

## 2007 BILLING SYSTEM

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In 2007 the billing has been redesigned again. This year, each lot owner's prorata share will be based on the actual area of his/her lot as available on the Garfield County Assessor's website. To find one's lot size, browse to the Garfield County website and then the Assessor's page: <http://www.garcoact.com/assessor/>. Click on the button to enter the Assessor/Treasurer Property Search page and enter the account number, address or other available tab for the property.