



Vista Irrigation District 2025 Water Rate Study Frequently Asked Questions

The mission of Vista Irrigation District is to provide a reliable supply of high quality water that meets the needs of its present and future customers in an economically and environmentally responsible manner.

What does Vista Irrigation District do?

Vista Irrigation District is a not-for-profit governmental agency guided by an elected Board of Directors. All revenues are used exclusively to enhance and sustain our water system, including ongoing operations, maintenance, and critical infrastructure upgrades such as water main replacements and fire hydrant maintenance.

To deliver high-quality water to more than 132,000 customers, we deliver a blend of local and purchased water supplies that are treated for your drinking water. Local water originates from the watershed and well fields located near Lake Henshaw. Purchased water supplies from the Claude “Bud” Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant, the Colorado River and Northern California are delivered to the District via the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and/or San Diego County Water Authority.

How is the District funded?

The District’s water service is primarily funded through customer rates. Customer payments support the District’s ability to deliver high-quality, reliable water services while remaining environmentally responsible for the resources in our care. The District is committed to good governance, fiscal accountability, and transparency, with systems and policies in place to uphold the trust of our customers.

Can the District earn a profit?

No. By law, we cannot charge customers more than it costs to provide water service. The District’s water system is owned by our customers and governed by the elected Board of Directors; we do not have shareholders or pay dividends.

What do water rates pay for?

The District uses industry-leading best practices to ensure a resilient water future. Revenue from water rates is reinvested into infrastructure to maintain system reliability and ensure continuous operations and service delivery. We are currently investing funds in projects, including:

- Maintenance and repair of critical infrastructure, such as water reservoirs, pump stations, and groundwater wells, including ongoing projects like the Lonsdale mainline pipe replacement project, rehabilitation of the Deodar Reservoir, and the Edgehill Reservoir replacement and pump station project.
- Maintaining more than 429 miles of water pipelines to ensure water delivery to homes and businesses.
- Maintaining, repairing, and replacing more than 3,800 fire hydrants.
- Hiring and retaining highly skilled, qualified, and licensed staff to operate the water system and conduct water quality monitoring.

These investments ensure that Vista Irrigation District continues to meet the community's water needs reliably and sustainably.

Why is the District conducting a water rate study?

The District is conducting a water rate study as an industry standard to ensure transparency and financial stability. Financial planning and rate studies help the District plan for long-term water solutions by meeting budget needs, maintaining infrastructure, implementing new technologies, complying with state and federal regulations, and funding its Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

The last rate study was conducted in 2021, but rising costs driven by inflation are impacting critical system operations, maintenance, repairs, replacements, and regulatory compliance— all essential for protecting the health and safety of our community. A new rate study is necessary to ensure the District has the resources to fund these operations and implement future improvements to maintain reliable water service.

An essential part of the rate study includes funding reserves to manage financial risks. Reserves help address challenges such as drought conditions, emergency repairs, natural disasters, and cash flow timing, all while continuing to provide high-quality water at the lowest possible cost.

Will this rate study account for future inflation?

Yes. The financial analysis anticipates inflation. The District recognizes the impact of record inflation and continues to take fiscally responsible action amid the ever-increasing impacts that state, national, and international decisions have on our economy.

The purpose of a five-year rate study is to adjust for differences between expected and actual expenses and income. It helps determine the revenue needed over the next five years to cover costs, address any surpluses or shortfalls, and ensure reserves remain healthy.

Revenue from rates must also fund reserves to handle unforeseen events, like emergency repairs or droughts, and to meet debt obligations. Reserve funds are not used for routine District expenses. The rate study looks ahead with projected costs and expected increases over the next five to 10 years, aiming to keep the budget balanced and prepared for the future.

How much will rates change?

The Draft Water Rate Study 2025 can be found here [Water Rate Study - Vista Irrigation District](#) and contains detailed information on the analysis of costs and the proposed rate increases for Fiscal Years 2026-2030.

How much will my bill go up?

Since each customer's meter size and water use varies, the District has created a calculator to help compute how much a water bill will increase based on the proposed rates and charges for calendar years 2026 through 2030. Calendar years 2027 to 2030 do not include San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) pass through rate and fee increases or decreases as they will not be known until they are adopted by the SDCWA Board. The calculator can be found [here](#) please have a past bill available when using the calculator so that you can select your meter size and enter your water use. If you do not wish to use the calculator or require assistance, please contact Customer Service at (760) 597-3120 during regular business office hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Fridays excluding holidays. You can also email for assistance at RateStudy@vidwater.org.

What happens if rates are not raised?

Water is a core service necessary for a healthy community and public safety. If rates are not raised, it would negatively impact the reliability and quality of our water delivery system. Critical projects, such as repairs and replacement of our pipes, pump stations, wells, nearly 100-year-old,

11-mile long Vista Flume and reservoirs could not happen. Any delays in implementing these projects would increase the risk of water service interruptions and even infrastructure failures, increase long-term costs and could lead to greater regulatory oversight by state and federal permitting agencies. Ensuring reliable water service and public health relies on continual investments in our infrastructure and water supply systems.

How are rates determined?

In 1996, California voters approved the Right to Vote on Taxes Act, known as Proposition 218, which established requirements for setting local government utility rates, fees, and charges. This legal framework guides how rates and charges for utility services, which are not taxes, are determined through evaluation and analysis of cost escalations related to operations and maintenance, water treatment and distribution, capital project costs, general inflation, and cost increases for materials and power. Different types of customers generate different costs because of their water use characteristics. Each customer group must pay their fair share and can't be required to pay the costs incurred by another group. For example, residential customers can't be required to pay more, so commercial customers can pay less and certain residential customers can't be required to pay more so other residential customers can pay less.

Under Proposition 218, property owners and customers will receive a mailed Public Notice detailing proposed rate adjustments, the date of the Public Hearings, and how to object to and/or protest the proposed rates. Property owners will have a minimum of 45 days to object to and/or protest the proposed rate adjustments through a written process. Before the Public Hearing, the District's Board of Directors will review any timely objections received to the proposed rates, along with staff's responses, and determine whether clarifications, further review or reduction or abandonment of the proposed water fees is warranted. During the Public Hearing, the District's Board of Directors will review public comments and written protests and consider approving or denying rate adjustments. Should the District receive a majority protest from ratepayers/property owners, rate adjustments will not be implemented.

Can a customer protest rate adjustments?

Yes, as required by California Law, property owners and customers will receive a Proposition 218 Public Notice detailing the proposed rate adjustments, the petition process, and the date of the Public Hearing. Written protests will be accepted until the close of the Public Hearing on November 19, 2025.

The District Board of Directors will hold a Public Hearing on November 19, 2025 at 9 a.m. in the Board Room at its Administrative Office to review all written protests and consider approving or denying rate adjustments. Should the District receive a majority protest from our service area, new rates will not be implemented. Should there not be a majority protest, the District Board of Directors will consider the increase and vote to approve or not. Only one valid protest per street address or parcel will be counted for purposes of the protest process.

Additionally, any member of the public can participate, in person or via teleconference, in the Public Hearing and provide comments regarding the rate adjustments to the Board of Directors. While comments can be made during the public hearing process, a protest must be submitted in writing and provided prior to the close of the Public Hearing to be counted.

Can a customer object rate adjustments?

Yes. On September 25, 2024, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 2257 (AB 2257) into law, adding Sections 53759.1 and 53759.2 to the California Government Code, which allows the District to establish formal procedures that allow written objections to be submitted and addressed prior to the adoption of new water fees, including rates and charges. Only individuals who have filed a formal written objection may challenge the water fees based on the contents of their

objection, and evidence in any lawsuit brought to challenge the fees will be restricted to the official record of proceedings. If an objection is not timely filed during this process, legal challenges to the water fees are barred. The District Board of Directors will hold a Public Hearing on November 5, 2025 at 9 a.m. in the Board Room at its Administrative Office to consider timely written legal objections along with the District's response and determine whether clarifications, further review, reduction or abandonment of the proposed water rate increase is warranted.

What is the difference between a protest and an objection?

A written protest is the property owner's ability to express their disagreement with the rate increase and requires no formal explanation for the basis of their protest. If a majority of the property owners/ratepayers within the District's service area protest, the new rates cannot be put in place.

An objection may only be made in writing and must specifically state why the proposed rate increases do not comply with the law, and more specifically, Proposition 218. Prior to the Public Hearing on water fees, the Board of Directors will consider all timely written objections, along with staff's responses, and determine whether clarifications, further review, or reduction or abandonment of the proposed water fees are warranted.

If the proposed rates are adopted following the Public Hearing, there is a 120-day statute of limitations for challenging the proposed water rates in court. The 120-day statute of limitations will begin on the date the rates are adopted or the date the resolution adopting the rates goes into effect, whichever is later and any legal action is limited to the issues raised in a timely submitted objection.

For more information, please visit our website at link [Water Rate Study - Vista Irrigation District](#) or type in www.vidwater.org/water-rate-study.