
DSS FAQ

March 31, 2023

No one has paid for meters in the past so why us now?

Each property received a meter for their house free of charge and each agricultural property received a meter free of charge. DSS are unique in that they are second domestic services on properties under 2.0 arable acres that have no restriction on water use and at a low annual fee.

Why has there been no community engagement?

Significant public engagement has occurred on this issue:

- Multiple letters went out in 2014-2015
- 2015 a fixed annual fee was introduced
- 2015 – 2 Open houses on Irrigation Water Rates and DSS
 - o Water Advisory Committee reviewed info for the open houses
 - o Water Advisory Committee reviewed open house comments
- 2016 Water Advisory Committee reviewed existing policy
- 2019 Water Advisory Committee reviewed and provided a recommendation to Council
 - o The recommendation became the Council resolution for the process we are currently administering.
- 2010 to 2023 – many public Council meetings where the public has opportunity to speak.
- On March 13, 2023 Council heard from residents in their regular meetings, and also directed staff to arrange further community engagement in the form of a public open house.

If I choose to pay the \$3500.00 for a DSS, will I be charged the domestic or irrigation rate?

If you choose to keep your DSS, your water use will be charged at the domestic rate.

Is there a monthly charge to have the DSS read?

There is a monthly mandatory base fee for each service. This fee is not specifically for reading the meter. If you choose option 2a there will be two base fee charges and if you choose option 2b there would be one base fee charge.

Can I have my DSS disconnected and connect my irrigation to my domestic service myself?

An owner can have their DSS disconnected free of charge, and they can connect their irrigation to their existing domestic service at their cost, only if connected **after the meter**.

What rate does the District charge themselves for watering its properties?

The District's metered irrigated properties are charged at the Cemetery, Park, Playfield Water rate per Schedule 'A' of the Water Utilities Bylaw No. 2014-19. All District buildings are charged at the Domestic rate.

If we continue to have the two meters, will we be charged the base fee year-round or just during the active season?

The base fee will be charged for the months used.

Can our arable acreage be reviewed and changed?

Yes, the District can review the arable acreage on your property. If a property owner would like to increase the arable area there is a fee for this addition. The fee is \$10,500.00 per Hectare per the Water Utilities and Water Rates Bylaw No. 2014-019 <https://www.summerland.ca/your-city-hall/bylaws-policies/bylaws>.

If a property owner has a blue-box installed currently, will they be required to install a pit meter in its place?

Council has directed that an Open House be arranged where specific circumstances and options can be discussed further. This kind of example will require further dialogue based on individual property information.

We were told years ago that we would not have to pay for meters on our DSS.

Council gave staff a new directive in 2019 based on a recommendation from the Water Advisory Committee. More discussion with property owners can occur on this policy approach at the Open House.

The DSS properties are using the DSS water for crop growing purposes.

Yes, many are but many more are using their DSS to water large lawns and other uses that are not related to crop growing.

Would the installation include an easily accessible stop and waste valve for turning on and off the irrigation supply by myself?

Yes

If I choose to pay the \$3500 for a DSS, will I be charged the rate for domestic water or irrigation water?

A DSS will be charged at the domestic rate.

What is being installed in the ground for my meter connection?

Here are two links to the Mueller pit setter specs that will be installed.

<https://www.muellercompany.com/sites/muellercompany.com/files/uploads/media/203CS1572FSBSN.pdf>

<https://www.muellercompany.com/thermal-coil%C2%AE/>

Will both services be coming from the same source if I choose option 2b?

Yes.

Does the District use water meters for watering all District owned boulevards, sports fields, plants/gardens, and parks such as Snow Avenue Baseball Diamonds, Memorial Park, Powell Beach Baseball Diamonds, Peach Orchard Park, the entire Dale Meadows sports field, etc?

All District facilities are currently metered as well as many of its larger parks and fields such as Peach Orchard Park, Peach Orchard Campground, Powell Beach washroom and playground, portions of Dale

Meadows fields, Canyon View Cemetery, many boulevards such as Prairie Valley Road south and the ovalabout. Other areas are not metered, but similar to the process we are working through to ensure the metering of all residential properties, it is our intent to meter remaining District properties over the next few years.

If the District is not utilizing water meters for the above properties, how are they ensuring that water is being used appropriately?

All District facilities are currently metered as well as many of the larger parks and fields such as Peach Orchard Park, Peach Orchard Campground, Powell Beach washroom and playground, portions of Dale Meadows fields, Canyon View Cemetery, many boulevards such as Prairie Valley Road south and the ovalabout. The District is committed to the responsible use of water and has certified staff with dryland planting and irrigation expertise to ensure that plantings are designed and planted with water conservation always in mind.

Will having a high number of DSS customers disconnect put a strain on the domestic water system.

The District does not expect these changes to put a strain on the domestic water system. Some DSS are connected to the irrigation system, but the majority are connected to domestic watermain.

Will the District honour previous letters from the District regarding their irrigation DSS?

The District will review previous letters for consideration.

Would one be able to opt back into the 2nd service meter program at a later date if one decides on Option 1, removal of the DSS?

If a property owner chooses Option 1, to have their DSS removed, there will not be an opportunity in the future to opt back in to have a DSS.

According to the Water Utilities Bylaw No. 2014-019: 8.1.2 The Director may waive the requirement for a water meter if the Director deems the water use or consumption is so insignificant that it does not justify the cost to the District to install, operate, and maintain the meter. In these instances, the Director of Finance will establish a flat rate based on the water use or consumption estimated by the Director. Could it be argued that impacted properties by this proposed change would use insignificant water compared to the District watering their boulevards, sports fields, parks, gardens, etc?

The use of "insignificant" in this clause was meant for areas such as small boulevards and medians where the cost of a meter installation, operation, and maintenance far outweighs the benefit of metering. In the District's conversations with the DSS owners, they have been very clear that the DSS are significant to them in meeting their needs on their properties.

If we choose Option 1, will the water service be turned off or fully removed?

At this time, Council had directed that further public engagement occur by way of another Open House. The water will be turned on starting April 11, and more time to choose an option will be provided.

What is the actual cost of the pit meter? What is the breakdown of costs between equipment, materials, and staff time?

The cost to purchase the meter is \$771.64. The full breakdown of the District's costs as of March 31, 2023 are as follows:

11 ½" x 15" Cover with locking lid (¾")	\$ 187.39
¾" Pit Setter 1.5m bury	1,171.08
15" Insulating Disc 1½" thick (¾")	32.80
R900 Antenna Assembly Pit 6' Cable	72.87
¾" - 1" Stainless Steel Keybox Rod	53.79
¾" - 1" A726 Keybox – no rods	89.37
¾" minus gravel	91.99
¾" FIP x ¾" Comp Adapter	76.89
¾" Neptune MACH 10 R900i meter	771.64
Labour	677.26
Equipment	955.00
15% Administration	627.01
5% GST	<u>240.35</u>
TOTAL INSTALLATION COST	\$ 5,047.44

The District is not charging the full cost of the installation and is subsidizing approximately \$1500 per meter installed to facilitate the responsible use of water resources through metering.

Why weren't the domestic second service meters installed in 2018 with the previous grant that the District received to install water meters?

The District did not receive a grant for water meters in 2018.

Are there not water conservation grants that the District can apply for?

As part of our routine operational practice, we seek grants to support key initiatives. Grants are generally designed to support equal opportunities for all public members or support public programs of broader efficacy. Grants are generally not designed to offset private costs or to provide preferential treatment or access by a subset of the general population except in cases of special social concern such as people or groups with mobility challenges, financial disparity, and specialized cultural considerations.

When will the public Open House be held?

The Open House date is yet to be determined but the District will notify everyone once this information is available.

Isn't the installation of meters too costly? Can't the District just increase the flat base rate for those that have an unmetered second service? This could increase revenue with the District and reduce costs to install the service.

Currently for DSS customers, there is no way of fairly distributing the costs of the water supply system. Those paying annual rates have access to unlimited water, in many cases, for lawns and hedges, while others are conserving. It should be noted that Council has also adjusted the annual fees for DSS for 2023 which are detailed in the Water Utilities and Water Rates Bylaw No. 2014-019

<https://www.summerland.ca/your-city-hall/bylaws-policies/bylaws>

What happens if I choose the combined meter option and I have a ½ inch domestic and a ¾ inch irrigation service?

In this situation, if the property owner feels that they may experience issues with a smaller service, it may be in the owner's best interest to keep the DSS, as the combined service will be installed on the domestic service. The District will work with each customer unique situations to come to the best solution.

Not having water available, or charged, will increase the fire hazard on my property. Is the District concerned with this?

The District Fire Department can be consulted for advice on how to Fire Smart your property. Residents are encouraged to consider risks and costs as they evaluate their options, which may include retaining a DSS.

The Schedule of the various water rates should be linked on the website.

All water rates are listed in the Water Utilities and Water Rates Bylaw No. 2014-019

<https://www.summerland.ca/your-city-hall/bylaws-policies/bylaws>

Why can't we just use blue boxes like agricultural water? This would be cheaper to install.

Placing DSS meters underground ensures they are free of frost and the owner can control when they are on or off. An Open House is being scheduled where further discussion can be had on the issue.

And how is the District measuring their own water consumption?

Water consumption is measured through meters located in all District facilities and larger parks and fields such as Peach Orchard Park, Peach Orchard Campground, Powell Beach washroom and playground, portions of Dale Meadows fields, Canyon View Cemetery, many boulevards such as Prairie Valley Road south and the ovalabout. Similar to the process we are working through to ensure the metering of all residential properties, all key District properties will be metered in the next few years, with consumption monitored through those devices.

Can the Growing Communities Fund be used for the meters? What other grant funding sources are available?

The fair apportionment of costs for this program is a policy decision of Council. At the current time, approximately \$1500 of the \$5000 cost for the meter is being offset by public subsidy, which will be

sourced from District savings. The Growing Communities Fund is a new program which has restrictions set by the province, but it may be able to offset the \$1500 District subsidy of the current DSS program.

Are there plans for efficiencies considering some of the house meters are failing? Or will residents be on the hook for 2 meters (domestic and irrigation)

The District is responsible for the repair and replacement of the existing house meter and will be for the DSS once installed. The new meters are expected to have a longer life span than the meters that are being replaced.