
Linda Sutter steamed up about water rate increase

By Linda Sutter June 11, 2026

The Proposition 218 protest is over.

The votes have been counted, the protests were insufficient, and the rate increases are moving forward.

For City Hall, the matter may be settled.

For many residents of Crescent City and Del Norte County, however, the real struggle is only beginning.

Buried within the City's own water rate study is a statement that should concern every elected official in this community.

The consultant who prepared the study, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), classified Crescent City as a severely disadvantaged community. The study cites a median household income of just \$35,340. Think about that number for a moment.

Not everyone earns that amount. Many earn less.

Many residents are retirees living on Social Security.

Others are disabled. Some work multiple jobs just to keep a roof over their heads.

Many families are already struggling with rising food costs, insurance premiums, medical expenses, fuel prices, rent increases, and property taxes.

The studies discuss reserves, capital improvement plans, debt service, infrastructure replacement schedules, and funding projections.

Residents talk about something else. They talk about choices: "Do I buy my medication this month?"

"Do I pay the water bill?"

"Do I keep the television service that provides companionship to an elderly or disabled person who rarely leaves home?"

"Do I cut back on groceries?"

"Do I postpone a doctor's appointment?"

These are not questions that appear in engineering reports or financial projections.

Yet they are the questions many residents will be forced to answer.

The water study recommends increasing the average residential water bill from \$22.49 per month to \$46.18 per month in the first year alone—a nearly 100 percent increase. Additional increases follow in subsequent years.

The sewer study points to debt obligations and future financial challenges. The water study points to capital projects, reserves, and future infrastructure investments.

Perhaps those projects are necessary. Perhaps the debt obligations are real.

But no spreadsheet can fully measure what happens when basic utility costs consume a larger share of a household budget that is already stretched beyond its limits.

The studies repeatedly discuss sustainability. True sustainability includes more than pipes, pumps, tanks, and treatment facilities.

It also includes the people paying the bills.

A community cannot be sustainable if the people living in it are forced to choose between water, medicine, food, housing, and basic quality of life. The Proposition 218 process may be over, and the public debate may be finished, for now.

But the financial consequences for thousands of residents are just beginning to be realized.

Linda Sutter is an iconic government watchdog; She announced her intention to run for the Crescent City Harbor Commission in November. We need her.