

# Court-approved sewer rate hike affects county

By Mike Scanlon  
staff writer

After months of court hearings and negotiations with the Metro Detroit Water Board, Oakland County's problems with next week's scheduled July 1 sewage rate hike are just about over.

But for heavy Wayne County sewage users, the problems may be just beginning under a Tuesday order by U.S. District Court Chief Judge John Fiekens after a closed chambers session with attorneys.

Due to take effect Wednesday is a complex system of sewage rate hikes

which vary substantially throughout the huge, 76-city water system.

As examples, southeast Oakland County residents will be charged \$4.23 for disposal of each 1,000 cubic feet of sewage compared to the old rate of \$3.40. Most Wayne County residents will pay \$5.81 per thousand cubic feet

— 7,500 gallons — under the new rates. William Hampton, an attorney representing Oakland County, said the two

biggest problems involving the water board and the county have been solved by replacement of a faulty sewage measuring meter in the southeast corner of the county and an agreement to average stormwater flows over a 10-year period.

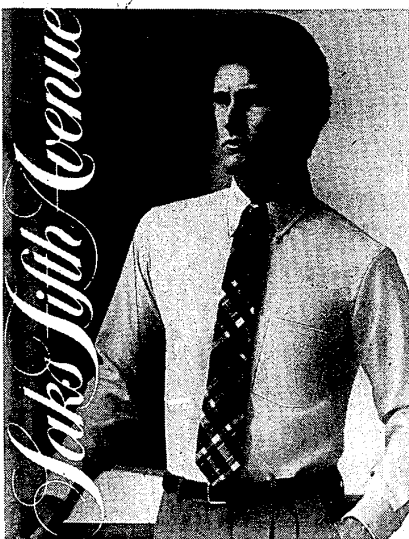
SOME PARTICIPANTS among the baffling array of plaintiffs, cross-plaintiffs, defendants and cross-defendants

involved in the sewage rate hike suits agree the biggest remaining stumbling block is who will pay for a sewer collapse in the Edison Corridor line near Sterling Heights.

The issue pits the odd allies of Detroit and Oakland County against Macomb County, Detroit and Oakland want Macomb to pay for the sewer main break. Macomb wants the costs divided among all customers of the water board.

Participants agree the issue is likely to be settled only in a lawsuit.

Meanwhile, big Wayne County water users will be hit with a 31 cent-per-thousand cubic feet pollution surveillance surcharge under Fiekens' order. The charge was suspended for all water board customers except those who are served under subcontract by the Wayne County Department of Public Works (DPW).



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## New law puts stop to water rate subsidies

By Lynn Orr  
staff writer

Gov. William Milliken is expected to sign into law a bill that will eliminate water rate subsidies to Detroit and some Oakland County communities while lowering rates to other municipalities.

The bill, passed by the state Senate yesterday, proposes elimination of a \$3 1/2 million subsidy to Detroit customers, as well as \$1 1/2 million in subsidies to outlying customers such as Farmington Hills, Bloomfield Township and West Bloomfield.

Water rate charges in West Bloomfield would be doubled, while the Metro Detroit Water and Sewerage Department would be forced to reduce rates to 36 other communities under the provisions of the bill.

The bill eliminates a 1917 law that banned the city of Detroit from charging more than double the water rate charged to city residents and requires every municipality to be charged the actual cost of service, rather than minimum rates.

The bill, expected to be delivered to Milliken within a week, is a culmination of a five-year fight by state Rep.

John Bennett, D-Redford, who said he is confident Milliken will sign the bill.

"After five years of wrangling with the city of Detroit, we've finally accomplished something," said Bennett.

"We were subsidizing the more affluent communities who were a greater distance from the source."

UNDER THE provisions of the bill, changes in rates could include:

- West Bloomfield: \$5.50 to \$11.55 per cubic foot.
- Farmington Hills: \$5.50 to \$8.02.
- Bloomfield Township: \$5.50 to \$6.84.
- Novi: \$5.50 to \$7.52.
- Canton Township: \$3.20 to \$3.36.
- Inkster: \$2.31 to \$2.67.

The 12 communities being served by the Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority, including Birmingham, the city of Farmington and Southfield, could see a reduction in rates, from \$2.75 to \$2.54.

Communities unaffected by the bill include Livonia, Westland, Garden City, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, and Bloomfield Hills.

The bill does not affect sewerage rates, which are scheduled to rise Wednesday.

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