

GEE

Decision No. 24108

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Investigation
on the Commission's own motion into
the rates, charges, contracts, rules,
regulations, classifications, opera-
tions, practices, services, or any of
them, of Hillsborough Water Company,
a corporation, engaged in the sale and
distribution of water in and in the
vicinity of the City of Hillsborough,
County of San Mateo, State of California.

ORIGINAL

Case No. 3089.

Arthur H. Redington, City Attorney,
for the Town of Hillsborough and
for certain consumers.

Brobeck, Phleger and Harrison, by
Gregory A. Harrison, for Hills-
borough Water Company.

STEVENOT, COMMISSICNER:

O P I N I O N

This is a proceeding instituted by the Commission on its own motion for the purpose of investigating the condition of the water supply furnished to consumers by Hillsborough Water Company, a corporation, which operates a public utility water system in the Town of Hillsborough, San Mateo County.

A public hearing in this proceeding was held at San Francisco.

For some time past complaints have been made to the Commission as to the turbid condition and also as to the taste

and odor of the water furnished by Hillsborough Water Company to its nearly two hundred consumers. The instant proceeding was initiated by the Commission in order to bring before it formally the numerous complaints for consideration and decision.

Hillsborough Water Company serves a portion of the incorporated Town of Hillsborough, San Mateo County. It secures its principal supply of water from the 44-inch transmission main of the San Francisco Water System (formerly Spring Valley Water Company's system) leading from Crystal Springs reservoir to the City of San Francisco. A small quantity of water is also secured by pumping from two deep wells. The evidence shows that the complaints are directed against the water secured from the 44-inch transmission main of the San Francisco Water System. For some time past this water has been of such character as to be objectionable to consumers for drinking and culinary purposes and at times its turbidity has been so high as to practically preclude its use for domestic purposes. The cause of the objectionable condition of the water has been due primarily to the general drought which has prevailed throughout the State for some years last past. The lack of rainfall has caused the depletion of the water in Crystal Springs reservoir, owned by the City of San Francisco, from which the Hillsborough Water Company receives its principal supply by purchase. The reservoir is now practically empty except for a small quantity of water in its lower area. Water enters Crystal Springs reservoir from East Bay sources, flowing into upper Crystal Springs reservoir and thence into lower Crystal Springs reservoir, from which it is transported to the City of San Francisco through the 44-inch transmission main. It is in passing

through the upper and lower Crystal Springs reservoirs to the transmission main that the clear water from East Bay sources acquires the objectionable characteristics complained of. Over these conditions Hillsborough Water Company has no control and is not in any manner whatsoever responsible for the character of the water supplied to it by the Water Department of the City of San Francisco. The company furthermore has no large reservoir or other similar storage facilities whereby any inexpensive treatment of the water is possible by sedimentation or otherwise.

Testimony was introduced bearing upon the period during which the objectionable turbidity of the water supply would probably continue. It appeared that this condition of turbidity would be temporary due to the assumption that as the season advances the draft upon Crystal Springs reservoir would decrease, causing a gradual increase in volume stored in that reservoir. This storage would be further increased by the runoff expected from the approaching rainy season. With increase in volume of storage in Crystal Springs reservoir there would occur a corresponding decrease in the objectionable condition of the water. The testimony further indicated that, through temporary construction by the City of San Francisco, Hetch Hetchy water would be delivered into Crystal Springs reservoir not later than June, 1932. All of these circumstances led to the probability that the objectionable features of the water supply would disappear by a date not later than one year and perhaps much earlier, while in the meantime conditions should gradually improve. These considerations appear to have been based upon the assumption of favorable conditions and it would seem reasonable to anticipate

that, if said favorable assumptions should not materialize, the period during which the consumers would be subjected to water of the objectionable character complained of might be indefinitely extended.

The evidence further shows that Hillsborough Water Company had installed filtration units in the past when it was necessary to eliminate a turbid condition but that these units, while still in place, are not of sufficient capacity to meet present requirements. These old units undoubtedly could be placed in operating condition and additional supplemental units could be installed which would provide the required capacity under present conditions.

The evidence shows that the turbidity in the water supplied to complainants can be remedied in only two ways: one, through securing a substitutional water supply of satisfactory quality and acceptable for all domestic purposes and, the other, through filtration of the present water supply secured from the Water Department of the City of San Francisco. There are no such substitutional supplies available at this time and if improvement in quality is to be had, filtration of the present supply will be necessary. Two alternate plans and estimates of cost for filtering the water were presented at the hearing, one based upon filtration of water containing a minor degree of turbidity and the other for filtration of the supply where a high turbidity exists. The estimated costs of the installation in accordance with these plans are approximately \$13,500 and \$21,500, respectively. Additional costs will be incurred in the operation and maintenance of the filtration equipment but no estimate was submitted in this connection.

The consumers testified that they had suffered severe inconvenience and hardship resulting from the poor quality of the water and that it was absolutely unfit for drinking and other domestic uses, such as bathing and laundry purposes, and that furthermore repeated appeals to the company for some measure of relief had been unheeded and they had been obliged to appeal to the Railroad Commission for relief.

Careful consideration has been given to all the elements involved in this proceeding, including the uncertainties of the probable duration of the period during which the turbid water will be received from the Water Department of the City of San Francisco, and it is my opinion that filters should be installed to remedy the present objectionable condition of the water.

It is incumbent upon a public utility to render sufficient and adequate service to its consumers and provide a potable water supply for human consumption. The evidence herein shows that Hillsborough Water Company has not fulfilled its obligations in this respect. It is therefore recommended that the Hillsborough Water Company be ordered to proceed at once to install the necessary filtration equipment to remove the objectionable turbidity.

The following form of Order is suggested.

O R D E R

The Commission having instituted an investigation on its own motion in the above entitled matter, a public hearing having been held thereon, the matter having been submitted and the Commission being fully advised in the premises, and

Basing this Order upon the foregoing finding of fact and on the further statements of fact contained in the Opinion which

precedes this Order,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Hillsborough Water Company, a corporation, proceed at once with the installation and operation of filtration facilities providing for the filtration of the entire supply of water received by it from the 44-inch main of the Water Department of the City of San Francisco, the same to be completed and in operation in a manner satisfactory to this Commission within sixty (60) days from the date of this Order, and

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that Hillsborough Water Company, a corporation, file with this Commission, not later than ninety (90) days from the date of this Order, a detailed statement of the cost of installation, together with a description of the type of filtration apparatus installed as ordered in the preceding paragraph herein.

For all other purposes, the effective date of this Order shall be twenty (20) days from and after the date hereof.

The foregoing opinion and order are hereby approved and ordered filed as the Opinion and Order of the Railroad Commission of the State of California.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 5th day of October, 1931.

C. Deane
Leon Whittell

M. B. Lewis
Frank C. Cleveland
Commissioners.