

Mammoth Lakes in water rights fight with L.A. utility

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

MAMMOTH LAKES – The people of this small High Sierra ski town have survived drought, forest fires and earthquakes. They have endured economic recessions and volcano scares. But nothing in their history prepared them for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

The DWP launched a legal attack six months ago for control of the city's primary source of water, Mammoth Creek, which tumbles down the slopes through town. The utility contends it has owned the water since 1905 and Mammoth Lakes has been poaching for decades.

The tiny Mammoth Community Water District says that if it loses the lawsuits, the district would have to buy water from the DWP. That would force the district to raise average rates to levels many locals cannot afford – increasing them by at least 100%, to about \$840 a year, one district official said.

The 7,700 year-round residents are largely working-class employees catering to vacationers who travel 300 miles north from Los Angeles. Forty percent are low-income.

Greg Norby, manager of the water district, said the DWP is using the lawsuits to intimidate his agency, hoping it will yield on the water rather than pay for a costly court battle. The district has already run up about \$300,000 in legal expenses in the case, he said.

[Read the whole story](#)