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Rate Design/Customer Issues:

Usage

James A. Busch Witness:

Sponsoring Party: MO PSC Staff

Type of Exhibit:

Surrebuttal Testimony WR-2015-0301

Missouri Public Case No.: Service Commission Date Testimony Prepared:

March 4, 2016

MISSOURI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION **COMMISSION STAFF**

SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY

OF

JAMES A. BUSCH

MISSOURI-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY

CASE NO. WR-2015-0301

Jefferson City, Missouri March 2016

Stall Ex 12

Staff Exhibit No. 12
Date 3-21-16 Reporter 71
File No. WN-2015-0301

1		SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY				
2	OF					
4 5		JAMES A. BUSCH				
6 7		MISSOURI-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY				
8 9	i I	CASE NO. WR-2015-0301				
10						
11 12 13	Q.	Please state your name and business address.				
13	A.	My name is James A. Busch and my business address is P. O. Box 360,				
15	Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.					
16	Q.	By whom are you employed and in what capacity?				
17	A.	I am the Regulatory Manager of the Water and Sewer Unit, Regulatory				
18	Review Division of the Missouri Public Service Commission (Commission).					
19	Q.	Are you the same James A. Busch that has already filed testimony in				
20	this proceeding?					
21	Α.	Yes, I am.				
22	Q.	What is the purpose of your surrebuttal testimony?				
23	A.	The purpose of my surrebuttal testimony is to respond to the testimony of				
24	Missouri-American Water Company ("MAWC") witnesses Gregory P. Roach, regarding					
25	customer usage, Office of the Public Counsel ("Public Counsel") witness Dr. Geofi					
26	Marke and Missouri Industrial Energy Consumers ("MIEC") witness Brian C. Collins					
27						
	regarding consolidated pricing.					
28	Customer Usage					
29	Q.	Starting on page 3 of his rebuttal testimony, MAWC witness Mr. Roach				
30	opines that	Staff's method for establishing test year usage is deficient since Staff's				

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method did not take into account weather. Specifically, on page 4, lines 3 – 8, Mr. Roach states that if the period chosen by Staff is warmer than normal, then sales/revenues would be overestimated for the test year and set at a higher than weather normalized level, and the opposite if the weather is cooler than normal. Please comment.

Mr. Roach's comments are not consistent with previous MAWC A. testimony. For instance, MAWC witness Dunn, in his direct testimony in this case, states on page 16, lines 4-5, that "[i]n fact, 'weather' is difficult to even define in a statistical sense, and establishing 'normal' weather is even more difficult." Further, in previous cases, MAWC has indicated that it is not simply hotter or colder weather that influences water usage, but precipitation and overall drought conditions. In Case No. WR-2010-0131, MAWC hired Dr. Edward L. Spitznagel, Jr. to discuss the impacts of drought, precipitation, and month as useful predictors for usage, but temperature was not (Spitznagel Direct, page 4, lines 11 - 22, page 5, lines 1 - 5). Based on MAWC's testimony in this case and in previous cases, the statement made by Mr. Roach in this case that temperature variances could lead to distorted sales/revenues is unfounded.

Q. On page 4, lines 8 - 13, Mr. Roach states that Staff's method fails to identify the inherent declining usage trend. Do you agree?

A. No. Staff's method identifies customer usage patterns that are relevant to establishing normalized usage today. Staff's method does not compare or even contemplate customer usage patterns from 10, 20, or 30 years ago. Staff looks at usage patterns over the past five years and determines that over the next three to four years, the general timeframe between MAWC's rate cases, usage patterns will be similar.

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MAWC's method on the other hand looks at usage going back at least ten years and tries to indicate that any trends that started then will remain the same. If, as MAWC argues, usage is declining, the level of usage from ten years ago is not relevant to usage patterns today. Further, Staff's method examines how customers actually consumed water over the past five years, years that have included hotter weather, cooler weather, wetter weather, and drier weather. Staff does not try to normalize all of the various factors that impact usage, instead focusing on actual consumer usage as provided by MAWC.

- Q. On page 4, line 19, Mr. Roach used a simplistic mathematic example of averaging. Please comment.
- Using Mr. Roach's example of counting backward from 12 to 8, the next number in that sequence is 7. And if you add 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 and divide by five, the answer is 10. Staff cannot disagree with Mr. Roach's calculation. However, customer usage is not as simplistic as his example. From one year to the next, customer usage may be higher or lower, based on a myriad of factors. Whereas a trend analysis is good at picking up trends over large periods of time, when the data fluctuates like customer usage an average over a very recent period can smooth out the ups and downs and can give a more reasonable estimate of usage for the next couple of years.
- Q. Mr. Roach spends a significant amount of time going over weather data going back to 1975. Please comment.
- A. Mr. Roach dismisses Staff's method since it is an average, but uses a 40-year average of cooling degrees days to show that Staff's timeframe is inappropriate.

However, when trying to show that Staff's usage of the past five years of usage is wrong because Staff's method uses a timeframe with warmer than "normal" weather, MAWC ignores recent weather trends.

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Q. What does Staff mean by recent weather trends?

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A. Looking at data supplied by MAWC as Mr. Roach's workpapers, this weather trend can be observed. Mr. Roach provides data that shows when you compare cooling degrees days over the 40-year timeframe, there were 13.1% more cooling degree days over the past five years than the longer time frame. However, if you look at the data over the last ten years, the increase drops to just 4.5%.

Q. What other issues does Staff have with Mr. Roach's use of 40-years of temperature data?

A. Staff has two other issues with Mr. Roach's approach. As noted earlier, Staff, and MAWC in previous testimony, disagrees with Mr. Roach that temperature is the sole weather factor in the determination of customer usage. Precipitation plays a more significant role in usage than temperature and Mr. Roach ignores this very important fact. Another issue is the use of a 40-year timeframe. To determine "normal" weather, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") uses a 30-year normal. It does not make sense that Mr. Roach would use a longer time period to determine "normal" weather. However, if the weather is warmer now than it was in the '70s, as Mr. Roach points out and the data indicates, Staff believes that for determining a water utility's customer usage using a timeframe with recent weather data is more likely to be more accurate than any other method.

- Q. When stating that the weather is significantly warmer, did Mr. Roach's analysis look at the entirety of MAWC's service territory?
- A. No. Mr. Roach only looked at data in the St. Louis area. However, the weather in St. Louis is not likely to be the same as weather in St. Joseph or Joplin.
- Q. Staff mentions that precipitation is a more significant factor to determine water usage than merely temperature. Is there any information regarding precipitation over the 40-year period that Mr. Roach utilized?
- A. Yes. In Mr. Roach's workpapers, there is a column labeled "total precipitation." Whereas Mr. Roach rightly points out that cooling degree days over the past five years are 13.1% greater than the 40-year average, he leaves out that the precipitation average was also 9.8% greater over the last five years compared to the 40-year average.
- Q. After reading Mr. Roach's rebuttal, would Staff use a different approach to establish normal usage?
- A. No. After reading Mr. Roach's rebuttal testimony, Staff is even more confident that using a five-year average is the most appropriate method for establishing normal usage for establishing rates in this case. Staff's method takes into account all of the variables discussed above, making it the most reasonable method that provides the Commission the best data to base rates on.
- Q. Starting on page 11 of his rebuttal testimony, Mr. Roach begins to discuss other parties' concerns regarding the Company's usage data. Then on page 12, Mr. Roach writes, "[t]he Commission Staff and OPC specifically cited a supposedly

'erroneous' residential usage per customer value for June 2013 as being 'suspicious' and

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'unreliable." Where did Staff bring up these concerns?

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A. In reviewing Staff's report and direct testimony, Staff never mentioned

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"erroneous," "suspicious," or "unreliable" values for June 2013.

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rebuttal testimony that may indicate that there are real concerns regarding MAWC's

Has Staff learned information regarding MAWC's usage data since filing

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recent usage data?

Q.

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A. Yes.

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Q. What has Staff learned?

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A. Staff recently learned, during meetings on February 22 and February 25,

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2016 that MAWC had a major issue with defective water meters. Staff was informed

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that a significant number of the meters used by MAWC either failed completely and/or

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were providing inaccurate meter reads for some period of time. Staff has submitted

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numerous data requests to fully grasp the extent of the problem. The responses to those

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DRs will not be available to be completely reviewed until after surrebuttal is filed, due to

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the timing of this new information. However based on conversations held between

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MAWC, Staff, and Public Counsel, MAWC has acknowledged that of an approximately

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97,000 meters that MAWC put into service, a certain percentage of them failed

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completely and were providing inaccurate readings and approximately 22,000 of these

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meters were removed from service.

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Q. How would this problem impact customer usage levels?

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A. When asked, MAWC personnel indicated that if a meter was removed due

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to complete failure, MAWC used its estimation procedures to back bill for the period that

- Q. If a meter read inaccurately, what does that mean?

A. Inaccurate meters read slower than normal. Thus, if a customer's actual usage was 5,000 gallons, an inaccurate meter would read less than 5,000 gallons.

Q. Of the meters that failed completely, did any of those read inaccurately prior to failure?

A. At this time, Staff does not know the answer to that question. Staff has submitted a DR to find out the answer and is awaiting a response.

Q. Does this additional information affect Staff's recommendation regarding use of a five-year average for determining normal customer usage?

A. No. In fact, this new information further strengthens Staff's method as the most appropriate method. MAWC is relying on inaccurate data to show a trend in usage. The inaccurate data would skew the results of MAWC analysis even further by using data that has inaccurate lower reads than actual consumer consumption. Staff is not aware of the full extent of this problem, but any reliance on MAWC's method based on this erroneous data is not in the public interest. Staff's method also uses this data, but averaging the data smooths the lower usage and minimizes the risk to ratepayers in relying on faulty data and trends. MAWC's method, on the other hand, becomes an even more severe risk.

Q. Does this additional information affect Staff's recommendation regarding MAWC's proposed Revenue Stabilization Mechanism ("RSM")?

A.	No. In addition to the reasons provided in Staff's rebuttal testimony, this			
new information actually provides additional support against the implementation of an				
RSM. For an effective RSM, it is crucial that there be accurate data to create a viable				
program and accurate data to ensure that the mechanism is working properly. MAWC				
has not shown the ability to ensure that the customer usage data is accurate enough to rely				
upon to implement a new regulatory scheme that will fundamentally change the				
ratemaking paradigm, such as its RSM recommendation.				
Consolidated pricing				
Q.	Have you read the testimonies of Public Counsel witness Marke and			
MIEC witness Collins?				
A.	Yes, I have.			
Q.	Do both of these witnesses oppose Staff's rate design proposal of			
consolidating MAWC's water districts into three districts?				
A.	Yes.			
Ο.	Do both witnesses make similar arguments against Staff's proposal?			
ļ	Yes.			
	What is the major argument that both witnesses make?			
	The major argument used by both Dr. Marke and Mr. Collins is the			
principle of cost causation.				
-	Generally, what is meant by cost causation?			
Į	Cost causation means that those customers who cause the costs should be			
the customers to pay for them.				
	new information RSM. For an program and a has not shown upon to implicate making paratemaking pa			

Surrebuttal Testimony of James A. Busch

- Q. Is cost causation the only factor the Commission should use to determine just and reasonable rates?
- A. No. There are many factors that the Commission considers when determining just and reasonable rates.
 - Q. Does Staff's proposal violate the principle of cost causation?
 - A. No.
 - Q. Please explain.
- A. Public Counsel and MIEC make the argument that the seven large districts, which have remained independent with regard to rates, have their own specific costs. However, most of the costs of providing service to all of MAWC customers are very similar, if not the same, from district to district.

For example, MAWC will have a cost of capital approved in this case. This cost of capital is the same for all of MAWC's districts. MAWC buys various supplies for the repair and replacement of mains, meters, etc. MAWC pays the same for those products regardless if MAWC uses them in St. Louis or in Lake Taneycomo. The management of MAWC receives a salary. That salary remains the same for all of MAWC's customers. MAWC provides a customer service function to all customers and those costs are the same regardless of the location of the customer. The only difference is how these costs are allocated, and the allocation process is much more art than science.

One area where costs may not be equal is labor. Employees who work in the various districts may actually receive different pay. This could be due to union contracts or other factors that impact salaries in the different areas that MAWC operates. It is because of these inherent differences in pay that Staff proposes to consolidate into

- three districts rather than have one single-tariffed rate. Thus, Staff's proposal does support the principle of cost causation as well as creating a rate that will be just and reasonable.
 - Q. What is the real argument that Public Counsel and MIEC are making?
- A. Their real argument is that since a customer in Joplin does not receive water from the St. Louis treatment facility, the costs must be different. For the majority of costs, that simply is not the case. Even when it comes to the actual costs of the facilities, it is not as if one district gets a nicer facility than another district. The major difference in facilities is based on source of supply and the number of customers that will be served. Staff's proposal takes those issues out of the equation.
- Q. If a facility is built in Mexico, why should any of those costs be shared with customers in Jefferson City?
- A. As stated earlier, many costs are already shared. In addition, spreading costs out to a larger customer base will help avoid rate shock to customers. Finally, all utilities have rates that are based on infrastructure that does not provide service or benefit to all customers.
- Q. What does Staff mean when it states that all utilities have rates that are based on infrastructure that does not provide service or benefit to all customers?
- A. For example, Ameren Missouri has one rate for all of its residential customers regardless of where those customers live. These customers live in widespread areas of Missouri including the St. Louis area, the Bootheel region, central Missouri, and northwest Missouri. The general reason why there is a single-tariff rate is that electricity is generated from various facilities and the entire service area is interconnected.

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However, what happens when an ice storm hits a portion of St. Louis? There is damage to the infrastructure in that area that Ameren Missouri must repair. Those repairs are then built into Ameren's rates at some time in the future. Thus a customer in Jefferson City is paying for the repair of facilities in St. Louis due to an event that only impacted the St. Louis area, even though the Jefferson City customers did not cause the costs and do not benefit from the costs. Staff's proposal for MAWC is similar to that concept.

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Q. How do customers feel about consolidated pricing?

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about the concept. However, one common theme that Staff hears when it travels to

As Staff mentioned in rebuttal testimony, customers are generally mixed

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various local public hearings for any water or sewer utility rate increase is how the rates

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for their utility compare to rates of their neighbors who receive service from a different

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utility. Thus, when it comes to reasonable rates, customers look at other nearby utilities

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in their area as one way to ascertain how reasonable their rate is. Staff's proposal creates

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a uniform rate in a general area that will not only be just but will also be reasonable while

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adhering to the general principle of cost causation.

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Starting on page 4, lines 15 and continuing on page 5, lines 1 - 8,

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Dr. Marke states, "[i]f rate continuity is to be championed by the proponents of

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consolidation for purposes of this case, then it stands to reason that some district is

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subject to rate shock, and this change to districts is necessary to avoid rate shock." Does

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Staff have a comment?

Q.

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A. Yes. Now is the perfect time to consolidate rates when no one district is

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likely to experience rate shock. Staff is very cognizant of how some customers view the

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idea of consolidating rate districts. If the Commission were to wait until one district was

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on the verge of experiencing rate shock, then the outcry from the other districts would be very vocal and the movement toward consolidation would be harder to justify. Thus, consolidating rates now is an opportune time.

- On page 6, Dr. Marke questions if consolidated pricing will incentivize the Q. acquisition of struggling water systems. Did Staff identify inaccuracies in some of Dr. Marke's statements?
- Yes. The first inaccurate statement can be found on, lines 12 and 13, A. when he writes, "[f]irst, it is important to remember that there was already a considerable amount of district consolidation that occurred in the last rate case (thirty to eight)."
 - Q. Why is this statement inaccurate?
- While there was some consolidation, it was not to the magnitude described A. There were not 30 water districts that were consolidated into by Dr. Marke. eight districts. There were 17 water districts that were consolidated. Seven of those districts remained independent through district-specific pricing. The other ten districts were included in District 8, but within District 8, the service areas were still separated by commodity charge, with two remaining on fixed rates as Staff discussed in its rebuttal testimony. Thus, there are actually eleven districts, not eight.
 - Q. Does Dr. Marke make any other inaccurate statements?
- Yes. On lines 14 16, Dr. Marke writes, "[s]econd, it is OPC's A. understanding that the current number of small, privately-owned water and wastewater companies in receivership is already historically small (only three companies with an approximate total of 500 customers)." This is not correct.

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There are two inaccuracies in Dr. Marke's statement. The first inaccuracy is the number of firms and customers in receivership. Currently, there are seven systems operating under control of a receiver. Combined, these seven systems have approximately 1,000 customers. There was another firm under receivership as well, but MAWC was recently approved to take ownership of that system.

The second inaccuracy is Dr. Marke statement that the number of companies in receivership is "historically small." Staff does not know what data Dr. Marke is comparing today's number of companies in receivership with to be able to suggest that today's number is "historically small." The receivership statute went into effect in the early nineties. Through the nineties into the early '00s, there were only two companies that were placed into receivership compared to the seven that are currently in receivership.

- Q. Continuing on page 6, lines 17 - 19, Dr. Marke states that the situation is improving. Does Staff agree that the situation is improving?
- A. No. Staff is assuming that Dr. Marke's suggestion that the "situation is improving" is in response to his mistaken view that there are less companies in receivership today than in some point in the past.
- Q. Should the Commission only look at the issue of consolidated rates through the narrow spectrum of companies that are in receivership?
- A. Not at all. If consolidated pricing allows for MAWC or other entities to acquire troubled systems to keep them out of receivership, then consolidated pricing is a favorable change that could provide benefit to Missouri citizens without any undue burden or cost.

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Q. On page 6, lines 20 and 21, Dr. Marke states that he is highly doubtful that approval of further consolidation will send market signals to outside utilities to invest in Missouri. Does Staff have a comment on this opinion?

- A. Yes. Staff spends a significant portion of its time speaking with owners and management of many water and sewer utilities. This time includes entities that are currently providing service in Missouri, entities that have exited the water and sewer business in Missouri, and entities that are interested in coming to Missouri. these interactions, Staff has been made aware that consolidated pricing is a major consideration in the decision to own and operate systems in Missouri and on whether or not to expand. It is Staff's opinion, based on its years of experience, that a move toward further consolidation will send a positive signal to those companies.
- On page 7, lines 1 8, Dr. Marke briefly discusses his opinion that Q. moving to consolidated pricing will give MAWC some sort of unfair advantage to purchase larger municipal systems, more so than purchasing small struggling private systems. Does Staff have a comment on this opinion?
- MAWC's actual behavior is different from what Dr. Marke's A. Yes. statement suggests. On the one hand, over the past few years, MAWC has acquired only one municipal system, the City of Arnold's sewer operations. In this proceeding, MAWC proposes to consolidate all of its sewer operations into one district, with the exception of the Arnold district, which would remain on its own. On the other hand, MAWC has purchased many small, privately owned water and sewer systems. MAWC has purchased the Hickory Hills system just outside of California, a system that was in receivership and in violation of DNR rules and regulations. It has purchased systems named

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Anna Meadows, Redfield, Emerald Pointe, and Saddlebrooke, among others. All were relatively small and had various levels of need. MAWC may want to expand into larger municipal systems, but the fact is that right now it spends more time and resources purchasing and operating smaller systems to the benefit of those ratepayers.

- Q. Finally, on page 7, lines 9 -17, of his rebuttal, Dr. Marke discusses the potential for reduced rate case expense is minimal. Does Staff have a comment?
- A. Yes. Dr. Marke is referring to the Class Cost of Service ("CCOS") study only. Staff's work in a MAWC rate case is much greater than any CCOS study or handful of CCOS studies. Before Staff can even start a CCOS study, Staff's auditors must perform an audit on over 30 separate systems. This is a labor intensive endeavor. Once that is accomplished, then Staff can focus on performing CCOS studies, another labor intensive endeavor. Staff's work does not include all of the time and effort that MAWC must expend on these functions as well. Therefore, to have Public Counsel dismiss Staff and MAWC's efforts to reduce expense for ratepayers as having a minimal effect is not an accurate characterization.
- Q. Turning to MIEC's testimony, throughout Mr. Collins' testimony, he argues that Staff's approach will mean that low-cost districts will be subsidizing high-cost districts. Does Staff agree with this argument?
- Α. No. As noted in rebuttal testimony, Staff's proposal does not necessarily lead to subsidies from one district to another. To be certain that a subsidy was being provided, one must know the exact cost of providing service to each given district. As was discussed earlier in this testimony, many of the costs are not directly assignable, but must be allocated. Therefore, no one knows the true cost of providing service.

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Finally, Mr. Collins does not explain which districts are the higher cost districts and which ones are the lower cost districts. He is making an assumption based on rate, which is as much a function of customer base as a function of cost.

On page 6, lines 5 - 19, Mr. Collins responds to Staff's reasoning that Q. moving toward consolidated pricing would encourage utilities to purchase water and sewer systems in Missouri. Does Staff have a comment?

First, on lines 6 and 7, Mr. Collins states that, "Staff's proposal to use consolidated pricing to accomplish this acquisition objective, without any restrictions on the acquisition price of acquired systems, is very troubling." Staff never makes the claim that there should be no restrictions on purchase prices. In acquisition cases filed by MAWC or any other entity, Staff reviews the rate base of the selling utility and makes its recommendation to only include the value of rate base in rates. If MAWC or any other utility decides to pay more, that is the prerogative of that entity, but Staff will not and has not recommended that any excess price be allowed in rates. Staff is not familiar with any case where the Commission approved a sale amount for inclusion in base rates that was above rate base. The suggestion that Staff is willing to accept any acquisition price is incorrect.

- Q. What is the next comment that Staff would like to address?
- In his next sentence, Mr. Collins "strongly encourages" the Commission to A. consider applying criteria on the acquisitions. However, he does not espouse those criteria.
 - Q. What is the next comment that Staff would like to address?

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utility simply to purchase systems at unreasonable acquisition prices with the expectation that the acquisition price will be subsidized by existing water districts." As noted earlier in this testimony, the only price that is built in for recovery is the amount of rate base. To

On lines 15 - 18, Mr. Collins states, [i]t is not reasonable for the acquiring

- make the claim that a utility would pay more for a system in the hope that other water
 - Q. What is the final comment that Staff would like to address?

districts will subsidize the purchase price is baseless.

- A. Finally, Mr. Collins states that the acquisition price should be limited to support reasonable prices. There is no need to limit the acquisition price because the only amount included in rates is the value of rate base.
- Does Staff have any final thoughts on Mr. Collins' overall statements Q. regarding acquisitions?
- A. Yes. Based on his statements, Mr. Collins would have the Commission believe that MAWC and other utilities are paying unreasonable amounts for the systems they have purchased or will purchase in the future and that Staff, Public Counsel and the Commission will allow unreasonable acquisition prices into rates. As a result, other districts will subsidize those unreasonable prices. As explained, Mr. Collins' statements are inaccurate.
 - Q. Will Staff update its CCOS with true-up data?
- Yes. Auditing Staff is finishing the cost of service studies at this time. A. Once Staff finalizes the accounting schedules, Staff will prepare new CCOS studies and Staff will distribute them to the parties. Staff is hopeful to have those ready for distribution by Friday, March 11, if not sooner.

Surrebuttal Testimony of James A. Busch

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- Q. Does this conclude your surrebuttal testimony?
- 2 A. Yes it does.

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of Missouri-A Company's Request for Au a General Rate Increase for Service Provided in Missou	thority to Implem Water and Sewer	,	015-0301				
AFFIDAVIT OF JAMES A. BUSCH							
STATE OF MISSOURI)						
COUNTY OF COLE) ss.	÷.					
COMES NOW JAME	S A. BUSCH an	on his oath declares that he	is of sound mind and				
lawful age; that he contribu	ated to the forego	ing SURREBUTTAL TESTI	MONY; and that the				
same is true and correct according	ording to his best	knowledge and belief.	. ~*				

Further the Affiant sayeth not.

JURAT

D. SUZIE MANKIN
Notary Public - Notary Seal
State of Missouri
Commissioned for Cole County
My Conmission Expires: December 12, 2016
Commission Number: 12412070

Notary Public