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Missouri Public Counsel Files Complaint Cases

Public Counsel alleges multiple water and sewer companies violate state law

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – **Acting Public Counsel Dustin Allison** announced today that the Office of the Public Counsel (“Public Counsel”) has initiated complaint cases before the Missouri Public Service Commission alleging three utilities charge for service in violation of Missouri law. Missouri statute requires individuals and entities providing water and sewer utility services for monetary gain to be regulated and receive rate approval from the Missouri Public Service Commission. Public Counsel alleges all three public utilities charge for water service, and two of the three charge for sewer service, having never received approval to do so by the Missouri Public Service Commission.

Tranquility Group, LLC d/b/a Branson Cedars Resort and its affiliated company Branson Cedars Resort Utility Company, LLC, are alleged to have operated an investor-owned utility without regulation charging un-reviewed and unapproved rates for water and sewer service to the Branson Cedars development in an unincorporated area of Taney County, Missouri south of the city of Hollister. Originally known as Oakmont Hills, the development was sold to a new developer-owner in 2005 and later combined with another development – Branson Log Homes – to become Branson Cedars.

Ridge Creek Development, LLC, and its affiliated company and individuals Ridge Creek Water Company, LLC, and **Mike Stoner** and **Denise Stoner**, are alleged to have operated an investor-owned utility without regulation charging un-reviewed and unapproved rates for water service to a development known as Ridge Creek near Waynesville in Pulaski County, Missouri.

TUK, LLC, and affiliated individuals **Louis Mountzoures** and **Jonathan Finkelstein** are alleged to have operated an investor-owned utility without regulation charging un-reviewed and unapproved rates for water and sewer service to a development known as Seven Springs in Jefferson County, near Eureka, Missouri.

The Missouri Public Service Commission is the state agency charged with regulating public utilities in Missouri. The Office of the Public Counsel represents the interests of the public before the Commission and on appeal in the courts.

Public Counsel has requested that the Missouri Public Service Commission issue an order directing each public utility to refund any and all unlawful charges for water service and sewer service, and for any other such relief as may be permitted by law.

State law permits a circuit court to impose a penalty of no less than one hundred dollars (\$100.00), but no more than two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00), per violation, and each day that a continuing violation persists is to be counted as a separate offense.

Acting Public Counsel Dustin Allison stated, “The Office of the Public Counsel will work vigorously to ensure that the customers of these utilities are made whole and that they receive safe and reliable service at affordable rates now and into the future.”