

Hitchin' Post
P.O. Box 67
Melrose, Mt 59743

2008 DEC 15 10:10:36

December 8, 2009

Re: Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing
Docket No. SDWA-08-2009-0020
Hitchin' Post LLC
PWS ID #MT002143

Ms. Artemis and Ms. Swanson:

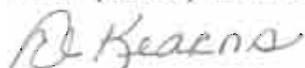
I am writing this letter in hope of reducing the \$7500 penalty that is proposed against the Hitchin' Post for missing water samples. In this letter I will give you a little history about the Hitchin' Post and try to explain the missing samples as best I can.

The Hitchin' Post (no "g" in name) is a small bar and café located in Melrose Montana which has a seating capacity of 46 people in the café and maybe 15 in the bar area. The Hitchin' post employs 3 full time and 4 part time employees. Melrose has a population of 76 full time people and about 25 seasonal. The economy of the town and my business is seasonal, relying on the fishing industry and ranching community. The Hitchin' Post closes for a month or two in the fall and winter because of a lack of customers. In the prime season May through August a good day consists of anywhere between 50 to 80 customers daily and in the fall and winter we have typically 15-25 customers daily. Water samples were not taken in November 2007, January 2008 and March 2008 because the business was closed. The September 2007 and August 2008 samples were just overlooked due to human error, no one to blame but me. We have always had satisfactory water samples for all the years we've been in business and have never had an unsatisfactory water sample. The well is less than 12 years old, capped and locked with no access to the public.

I do disagree with the general allegations paragraph line 4 that states we have 15 service connections. We have only 3 that are used for drinking water. The other water service to the building are 2 outside for watering lawns, 2 bathroom sinks, 2 toilets, 1 hand sink in the kitchen and 2 dish washing sinks located in the kitchen. Line 6 states that we serve 75 to 100 persons per day year-round through one service connection. In the summer months we probably, on a good day, would serve 75 glasses of drinking water but not close to 75 or 100 daily year-round.

In closing I do agree that the samples in question are missing. I am now taking samples on the same day every month so they are not forgotten. I am hoping for some leniency since we have never had a bad sample and that a smaller penalty would be considered as the \$7500 would be devastating to my small business.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Debbie Kearns
Hitchin' Post LLC, operation member