



Utility Billing And Adjustments



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Presented by:

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Overview

1. Overview of Utility Customer Service (UCS)
2. History
3. Leading causes of high bills
4. Bill accuracy
5. Billing issue review process
6. Types and amounts of adjustments

UCS Overview

- Billing and collections arm of the largest water / wastewater utility in Texas
- UCS bills and collects in excess of \$900 million in revenue for the Combined Utility System (CUS) annually
- Over 465,000 water meters; 440,000 water and sewer bills mailed or emailed monthly, serving 2.2 million residents
- 40-60,000 calls received monthly

Recent History

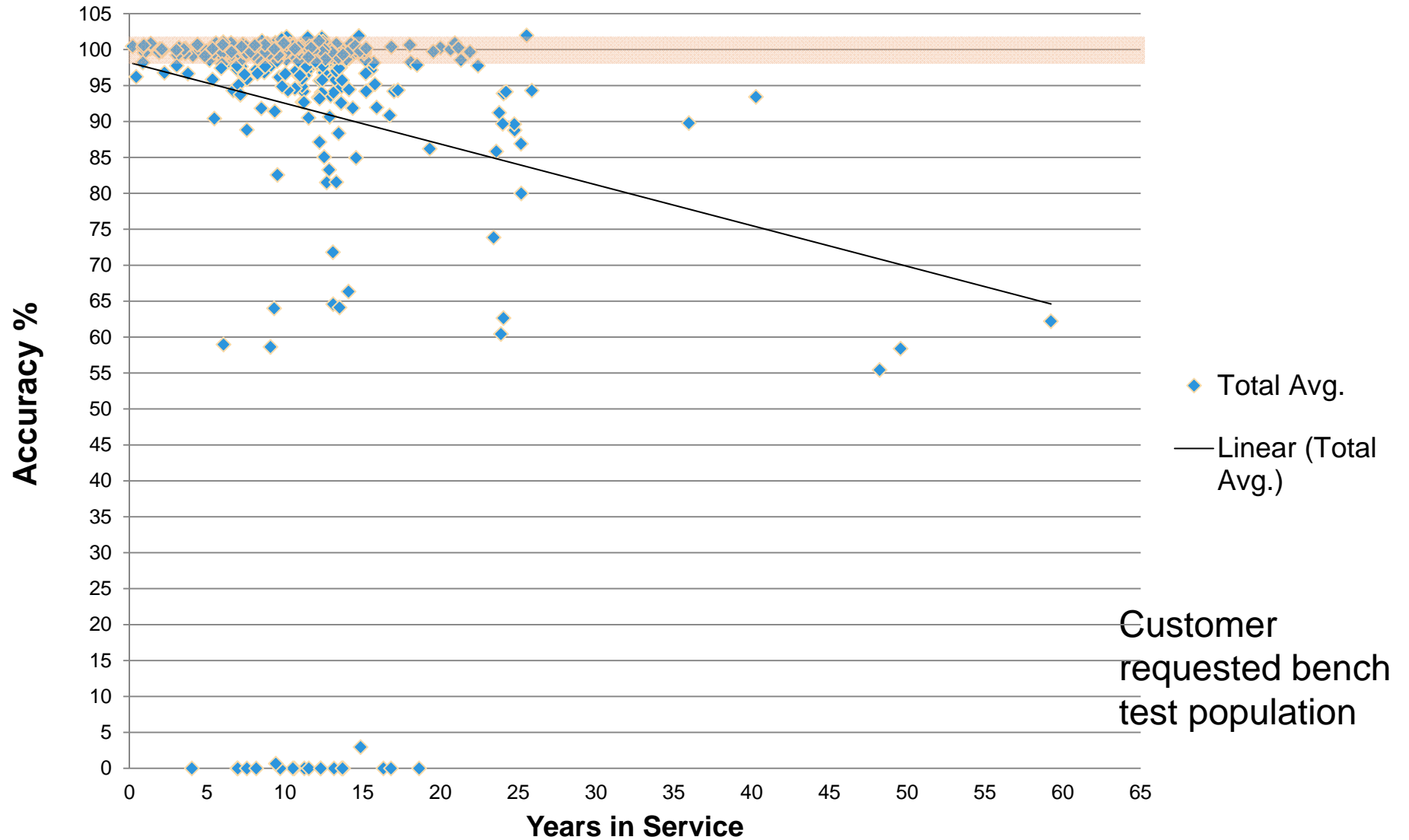
- Changes to Chapter 47 in April of 2013
 - Established Exceptional Circumstances Adjustment
 - Previously two types of adjustments
 - Leak Adjustment
 - Unusually Large Bill Adjustment
 - Established the Water Adjustment Board

High Consumption - Leading Causes

1. Leaking Toilet	@ ½ gallon per minute 21,600 gallons per month Can be much higher	\$314.55 extra
2. Irrigation System Leak	@ 1 gallon per minute 43,200 gallons per month	\$664.13 extra
3. Watering Garden/Grass	@ 5 gallons per minute, 2 hours per day 18,000 per month	\$266.88 extra
4. Hose Left on – 1 Night	@ 5 gallons per minute for 9 hours 2,700 in one night	\$38.10 extra
5. Pool Fill	20,000 gallons (varies from 10,000 to 30,000+)	\$298.66 extra
6. Private Line Break – 1 week	@ 7.5 gallons per minute, 75,600 per week	\$1,172.61 extra
7. Private Line Break – 1 month	@ 7.5 gallons per minute, 324,000 per month	\$5,129.22 extra

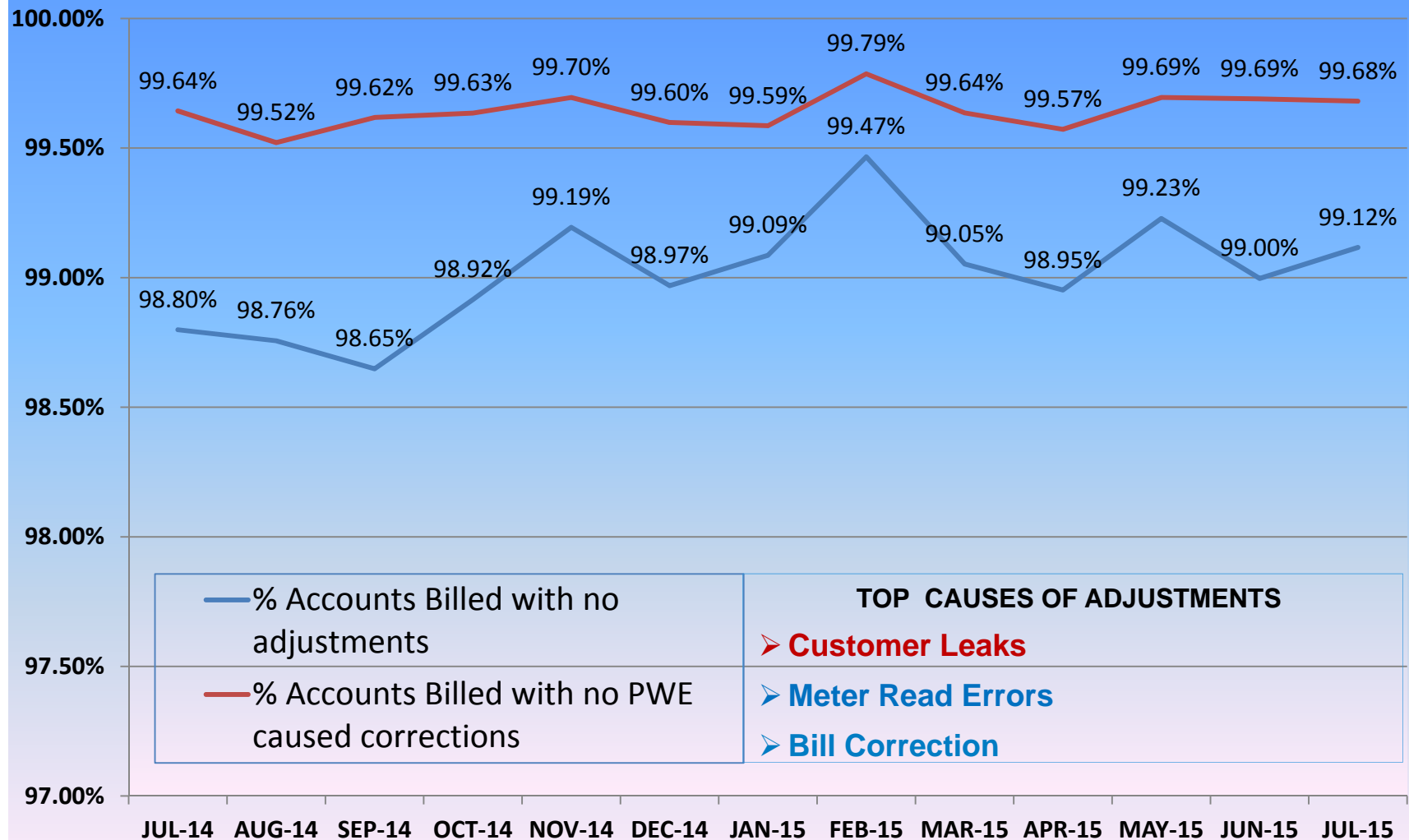
All amounts based on 2015 rates for a 5/8" residential meter.

METER ACCURACY TESTS (5/8-2") – SCATTERPLOT



Tests from FY 2013 to present
Zero consumption results indicate stuck meters

UCS Billing Account Accuracy



Billing Issue Review Process

If customer dissatisfied, they have 10 days to request review by

Water Adjustment Board.

Board Appeal

If customer dissatisfied with Review, they have 10 days to request Administrative Hearing before independent hearing examiner.

Administrative Hearing

If customer dissatisfied, a subsequent field investigation determines approval or denial. Administrative Review generally occurs within 90 days of bill in question.

Administrative Review

Contact Center, Service Requests, correspondence, emails & web chats. All cases tracked from intake to resolution. Up to one billing cycle to approve or deny based upon investigation.

Customer Service Intake

Water Adjustment Board Created in 2013

- 3 members appointed by Mayor and approved by Council
 - One must hold Journeyman plumber's license and been eligible to sit for Master exam in previous 5 years
- Has jurisdiction over appeals of leak adjustments, unusually large bill adjustments & exceptional circumstances adjustments
- Reviews administrative hearing decisions based on the record of those hearings
- Appointed board may uphold, reverse or modify decision of hearing examiner in conformity with chapter 47

FY15 Hearings and WAB Reviews Results

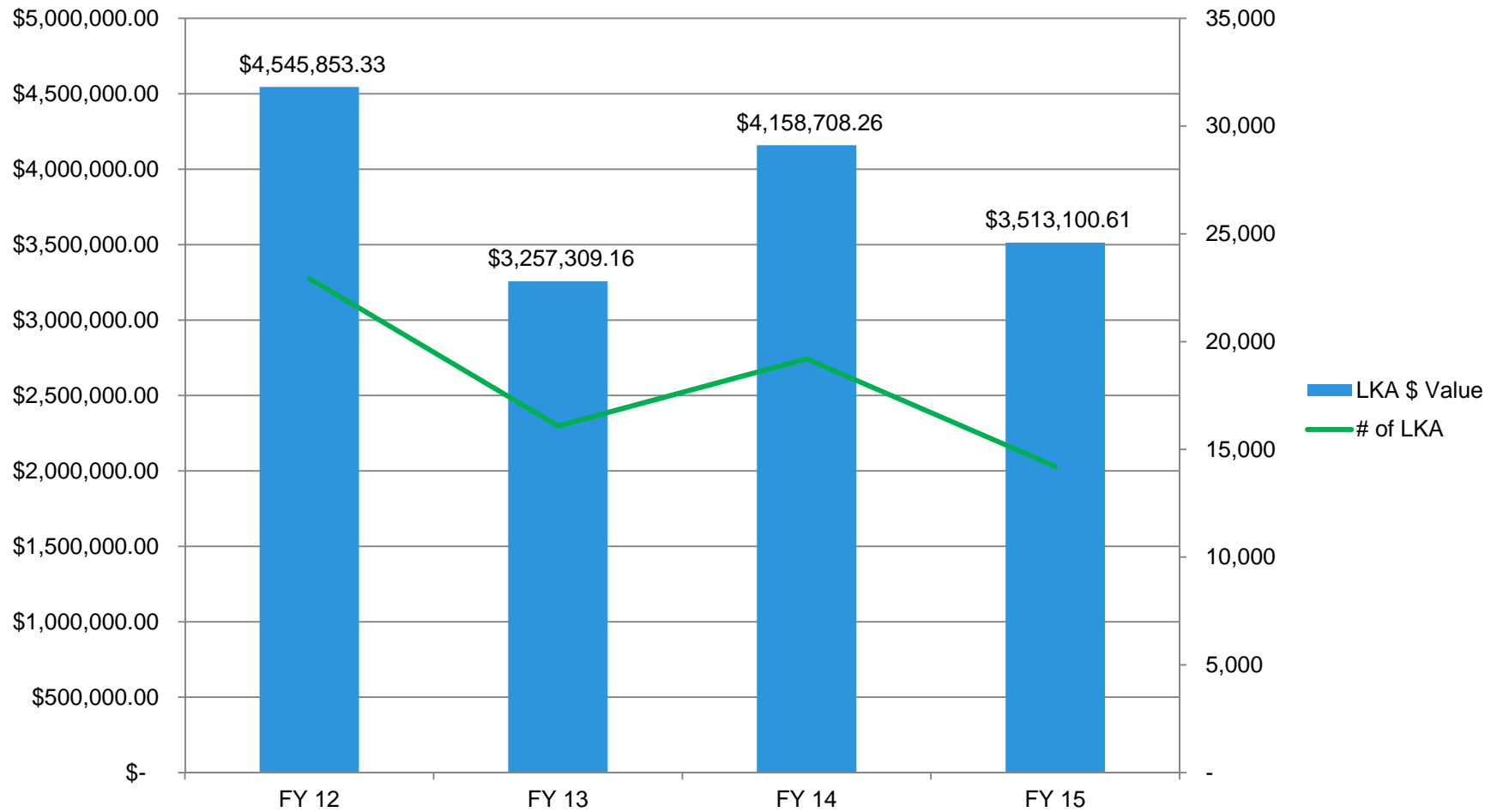
	Administrative Hearings	Water Adjustment Board Reviews
Upheld Administrative Reviews	110	49
Not within Board's jurisdiction		35
Issue resolved - no hearing	9	
Customer rescinded request	4	1
Administrative Review/Hearing overturned:		
Partial	1	22
Full	<u>13</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	137	111

Adjustments Available to Customers

Type	Who's Eligible	Eligible Refund
Leak Adjustments (LKA)	Any customer that discovers and repairs private side leak, and seeks reduction in the bill. (2 per 12 months)	Customer pays established average consumption plus one half of excess charges resulting from leak.
Unusually Large Bill Adjustments (ULB)	Single-family residential customer whose bill is inexplicably more than 200% greater than average usage in a single month (1 per 12 months)	Customer only pays 150% of their average consumption.
Exceptional Circumstances Adjustment (ECA) (2013)	Any residential or commercial customer whose bill is inexplicably more than 500% greater than average usage (1 per 24 months)	Customer only pays 500% of average consumption for each of up to two months. Limited to \$4,000 credit.

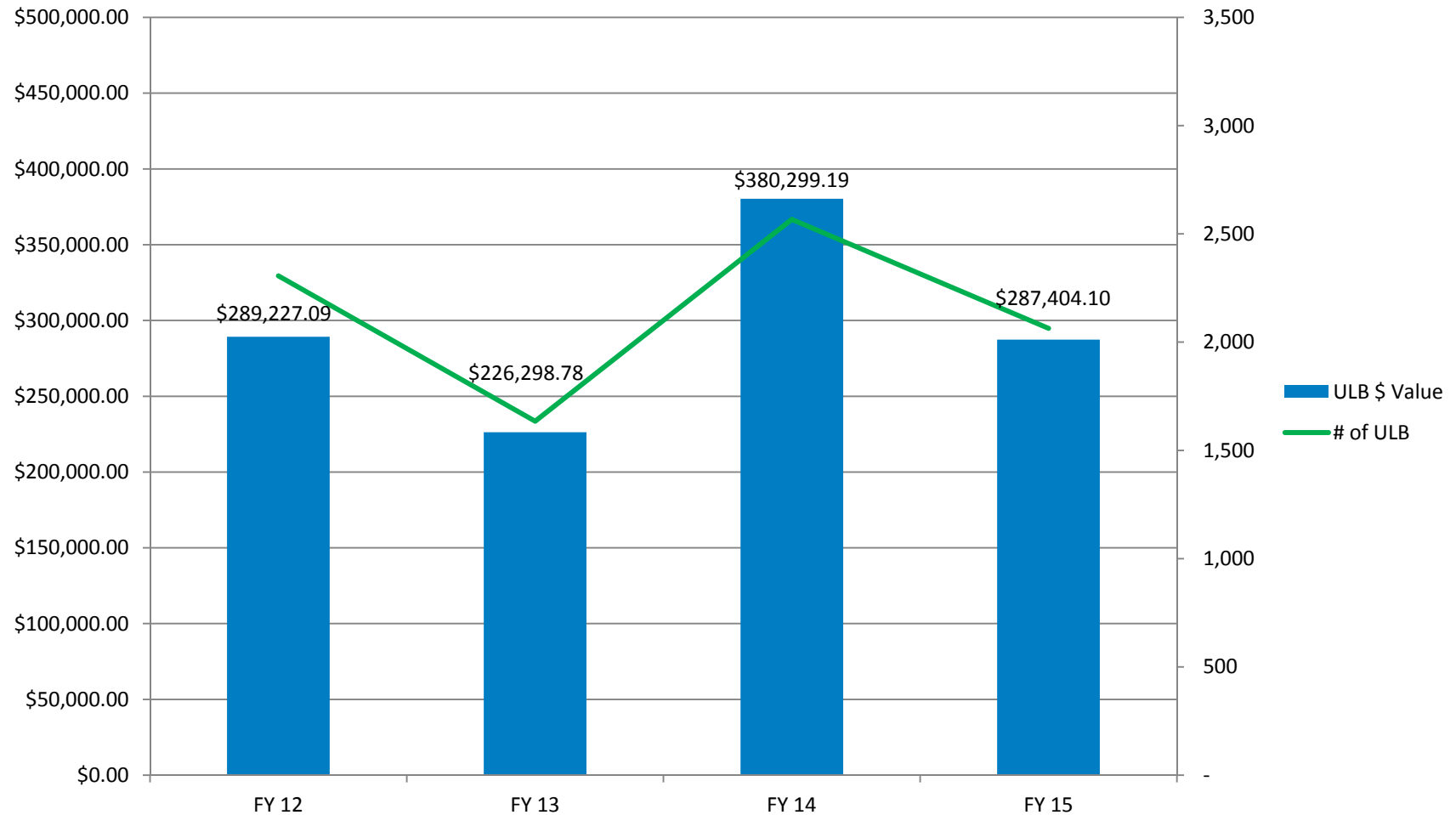
A customer who disputes the amount of an adjustment may appeal through an Administrative Review, then a Administrative Hearing, and finally, a Water Adjustment Board review.

Leak Adjustments Applied



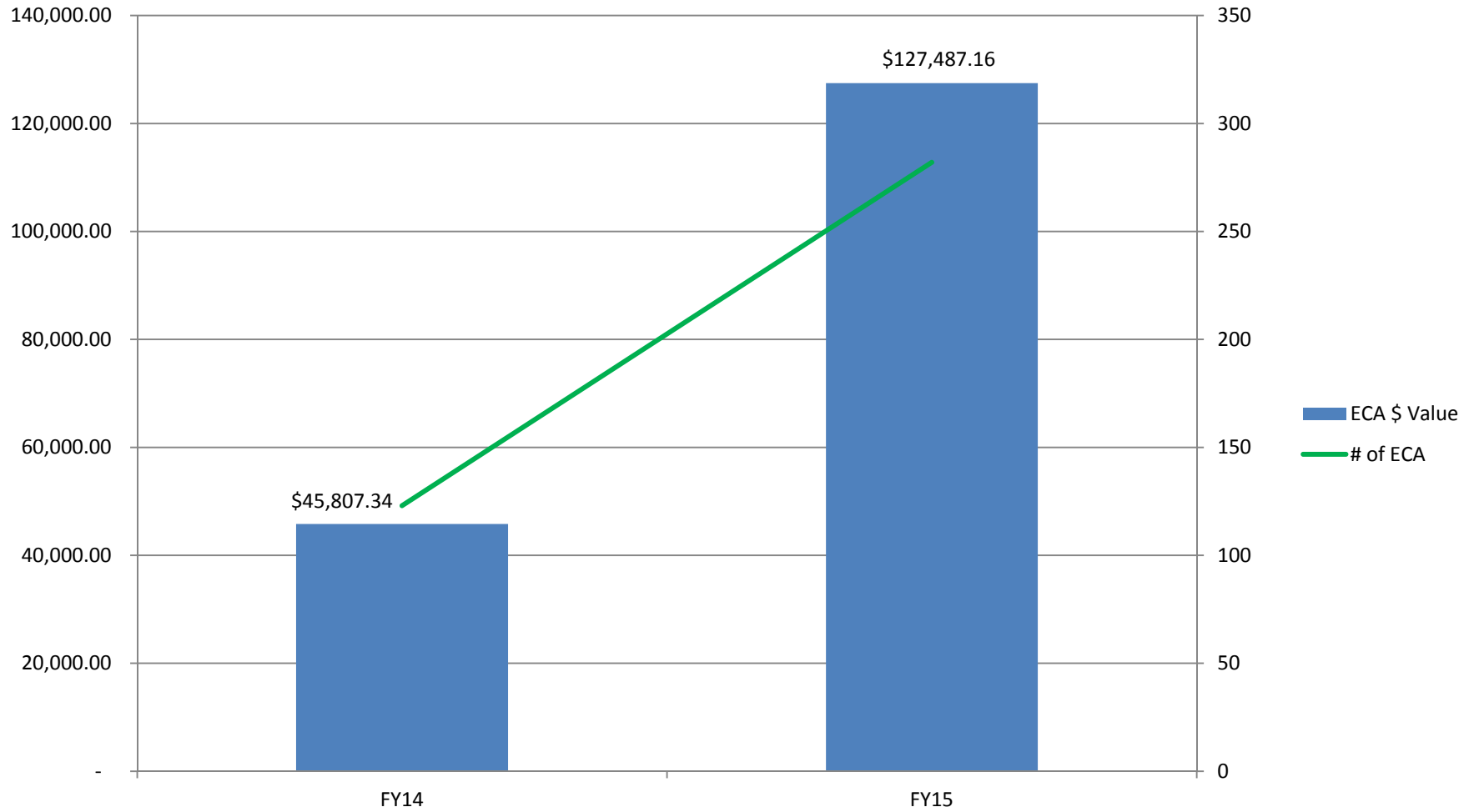
Note: FY 2012 experienced the most severe months of the citywide drought which increased leaks. FY 2014, experienced an unusual amount of cold weather, with a similar effect.

Unusually Large Bill Adjustments Applied



Note: In FY 2012 we experienced the most severe months of the citywide drought which increased unusual situations. In FY 2014, we experienced an unusual amount of cold weather, with a similar effect.

Exceptional Circumstances Adjustments



Note: First ECA credits were granted in February 2014.

Working with Customers

- Work with customers with a high bill
 - Most customers can sign up for our Consumption Awareness Program (CAP)
 - Develop water budget
 - Get alerts when exceeding budget
 - Fixed network provides hourly reads for most customers
 - Help determine cause –
 - Website describes how to determine if there is a leak
 - Website describes how to find leaks
 - Payment plans offered
 - No interest or penalty when current on agreed plan
 - No service interruption if appealing
 - Must pay all non-disputed monthly bills

Comments or
Questions?