

SCMU Review

(schmoo ri-vyoo) n. items of interest and information from your Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities

No. 58 FALL 2014 SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES 212 LOCUST STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831)420-5220 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com



Message from the Water Director

WHILE THE START OF THE NEW CALENDAR YEAR is still a few weeks away, the start of the new water year has just begun. The water year runs from October 1 through September 30. And no one would like to see rain, and an end to the current drought,

more than we would at the Water Department.

As the drought drags on, rationing drags on. But you know what?

It's paid off. Thanks to all of you — our customers — we ended the summer with more water in Loch Lomond Reservoir than we had projected.

We have met or exceeded our goals for water savings every month since rationing started last May. We are in better shape to face an uncertain future than we'd hoped.

Santa Cruz was one of the first communities in California to impose water rationing. We have been featured in drought stories in the LA Times, the NY Times, on National Public Radio, BBC World News and by most news outlets in Northern and Southern California. But unlike many of the stories told about communities' reaction to calls for water conservation, Santa Cruz's story is one of success. And there would be no story without all your efforts and sacrifices to save water and protect your supply.

Water supply is the main topic of this issue of the SCMU Review. You'll learn about the Water Supply Advisory Committee and the work they're doing to address our water supply challenges. You'll hear about how much rain we need to end rationing. And you'll see results from a survey of community attitudes about water use and water supply.

I wish I had a positive forecast to share with you for the upcoming winter. As I write this, the predictions for an ongoing dry spell continue. Some of the predictions for 2015 show possible modest increases in rainfall over last year, and some predictions about ongoing drought are downright dire. So at the water department, we're preparing for the worst and hoping for the best.

Throughout the past six months, you — our customers and our community — have shown your understanding of the devastating potential of ongoing drought, and have done your very best to save the precious water supply we have. We are so grateful for your response.

Rosemary Menard
Water Director

MONTH-TO-MONTH RATIONING CONTINUES

AT THE OCTOBER 14 SANTA CRUZ CITY COUNCIL MEETING, WATER DEPARTMENT STAFF UPDATED the council on the status of the current water supply and recommended that the council extend Stage 3 Water Restrictions (rationing) on a month-to-month basis.

The council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Based on data collected during prior droughts, the Water Department projects that it will take at least 12 inches of rain in the watershed for rationing to be lifted during the winter season. But by no means does 12 inches solve our current supply problem, nor does it get us out of drought. Based on our recovery from past droughts, we estimate that it will take 60 inches of rain in the watershed during our water year to end our drought. And we estimate the probability of receiving 60 inches of rain this water year at about 24 percent.

In the 2014 water year, the Santa Cruz watershed received just 19 inches of rain. Our "normal" rainfall in the watershed is about 50 inches.

This made 2014 one of the driest on record, and the third year in a row of well-below normal rainfall.

SO WHY LIFT RATIONING AT ALL UNTIL WE HAVE THE FULL 60 INCHES NEEDED TO GET US OUT OF DROUGHT? The main goal for Stage 3 Water Restrictions is to restrict discretionary outdoor uses. The restrictions were created to provide enough water for indoor uses, such as bathing, laundry and cooking needs, while severely restricting the amount of discretionary water for outdoor uses. Because customers are not typically irrigating landscape during the winter months, particularly if we've received 12 inches of rainfall, there is enough water available for indoor uses without rationing. But, should we not receive more than 12 inches of rain by next spring, we will need to revert back to Stage 3 restrictions (rationing) and may even need to move to Stage 4 restrictions.

The Water Department provides weekly updates on rainfall totals, as well as updates on how the community is doing on achieving its water conservation goals, and what's happening at the state level. To stay abreast of that information plus information on current water restrictions, please visit www.cityofsantacruz.com/2014drought.

Reliable and Sustainable Santa Cruz Water Supply Solutions

FOR MANY YEARS, THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ FOLLOWED DIRECTION FROM CITY COUNCIL to pursue seawater desalination as part of a solution to impacts from drought, and from releasing water to support critical fish habitat. In 2013, the council put the desal project on hold, agreeing that there should be further engagement of the community in identifying potential water supply solutions.



The Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC) is a group of 14 community members representing business, the environment, education and the Water Commission. Appointed by the City Council last spring, the committee is charged with developing recommendations to aid in creating a reliable and sustainable water supply.

The WSAC meetings began last April; the group is scheduled to complete its work in a 12-month window. They meet monthly and the public is welcome and encouraged to attend. Their meeting schedule and location information is posted on their website, www.santacruzwatersupply.com.

The committee's scope of work covers three phases. During the first phase, the committee's focus is on learning about our water sources and delivery system in detail, our community's water supply and demand patterns, and about past efforts to address the supply and demand gaps.

During the second phase of the committee's work, they will explore possible solutions in detail using criteria and weights based on community values.

In the final phase of their work, the Water Supply Advisory Committee will develop a list of recommendations to address the supply and demand gap which will be taken to the Santa Cruz City Council to review and take action on.

On October 16, the WSAC hosted "Our Water, Our Future: the Santa Cruz Water Supply Convention" which featured over 50 proposals to help solve our supply issues. Proposals were submitted by community members, who presented their ideas and strategies during the convention. The event was open and free to the public and was well attended. Civinomics, a local online community engagement platform, created an evaluation tool for the proposals. The community was invited to view each proposal submitted, then to evaluate it online. This process allowed the community to better understand the decision making process for moving potential water supply projects forward.

In December, the committee will begin its second phase of work by exploring water supply ideas and strategies in detail. That phase will continue into spring of 2015.

Survey Shows Residents Support Local Water Restrictions

IN A RECENT SURVEY CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF THE WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, Santa Cruz residents listed concern about water supply as their current top issue of concern. However, they also reported strong support for water restrictions, including rationing.

The telephone survey, conducted by Gene Bregman and Associates, queried residents on their opinions on issues of concern within the city. Worry about future water supplies surfaced as the top concern, with 77 percent of polled residents reporting it as a "very serious" need facing the city. Seventy-four percent responded that "inadequate water supplies for our future needs" is a very serious problem and 59 percent reported that "inadequate water supplies for all our needs today" is a very serious problem.

Though 51 percent of those surveyed strongly agreed with the statement "I've already cut back on water use for my home as much as I

can; there's not much more I can do to save water," 82 percent said that the statement "while the current water restrictions are sometimes difficult, I will keep implementing most of them even when there is no drought" came closest to their opinion. And when asked how often water rationing would be acceptable during the next ten years, 49 percent said the current level of rationing "is always acceptable."

In addition to strong support for water restrictions, the survey also demonstrated strong support for new water supplies.

Fifty-two percent of survey respondents reported that "we have too little water most of the time; we need to create new supplies and lessen demand all the time" and 60 percent reported "we need to find new sources of water if we are going to solve our long-term water supply problems." Sixty-nine percent strongly

agreed with the statement "we need to have a more stable and predictable supply of water whether or not we are experiencing drought conditions."

Forty percent of residents polled reported that "being able to flush the toilet whenever it is used" was very important to them; only nine percent reported being "able to wash my car" as very important. Protecting the environment with ongoing reduction measures was very important to 79 percent of residents surveyed.

The telephone survey was conducted the week of October 6. Four hundred City of Santa Cruz residents were interviewed. Full survey results were presented by Gene Bregman to the Water Supply Advisory Committee at their October 23 meeting. You can see the full survey and results at www.santacruzwatersupply.com under the October 23 meeting materials.

Don't Believe the Flushable Label!

MANY PRODUCTS ARE ADVERTISED AS "FLUSHABLE" including baby wipes, cleaning wipes, make-up removal pads and feminine products. Diaper liners and dog waste bags are also touted as flushable and biodegradable. Don't believe the labels — these products will clog pipes.

They do not break down as bathroom tissue is designed to do.

Even if products are "biodegradable," there is not enough time for this process; they will cause problems in residential and main sewer lines. Save yourself a plumbing problem and throw these items in the trash.



Sharp Solutions

DISCARDING USED SHARPS AS GARBAGE OR RECYCLING IS ILLEGAL IN CALIFORNIA. Be safe and keep waste and recycling employees safe. Never place syringes or sharps in the waste or recycling containers. Needles pose a serious risk to employees on the sorting line.

A hypodermic needle or sharp found among the recycling material, either loose or in a container, brings the sorting operation to a halt in order to remove it.

Used needles *must* be placed in dedicated needle and sharps containers (usually red) available at local pharmacies. For a list of drop-off sites visit www.sharpmedsolutions.org.

Rinsing Recyclables

AS WE LOOK FOR WAYS TO CONSERVE water, here are some tips for cleaning recyclables without using extra water:

- Most beverage containers don't need to be rinsed. Simply empty them and leave upside down in the dish rack for several minutes to allow all liquid to drain out.
- For jars that held peanut butter, jelly or other sticky food, clean the inside with a spatula or a paper towel. When residue is removed, place the jar in your recycling cart.
- If you have containers that need a rinse, use dishwasher or reuse water you have cleaned vegetables with or cooked pasta with.

Did You Know...

That you can recycle your used ink cartridge at any Santa Cruz Public Library? In an effort to keep ink cartridges out of the landfill, the Public Works Department collects used cartridges from libraries, recycles them with Rapid Refill Ink, then uses the money collected from the recycled ink cartridges to fund recycling programs in Santa Cruz schools!

What To Do With Excess Cooking Oil and Grease?

FATS, OIL AND GREASE DO NOT BELONG IN SEWER PIPES. When these materials flow into pipes they cool and harden. As grease and fat build up they decrease water flow. Before long you may have a plumbing problem. Here is what you can do:

- Never pour grease down the drain.
- Collect excess grease or cooking oil in a sturdy container. When cool, cover it and place in the garbage.
- Don't put grease down the garbage disposal.
- Scrape or wipe grease and food residue from plates, pots, pans, utensils and surfaces. Put used paper towels in the garbage.
- Cooking oil (in a secure container) can be taken to the Green Station, 433 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, daily during business hours.

Low Water User? Save Money on Your Bill

SCMU CUSTOMERS HAVE MADE EXCEPTIONAL CUTBACKS this summer by not only limiting outdoor watering, but also conserving indoors. And less indoor use means less water entering the sewer system. Not only have your efforts helped preserve the reservoir in case the drought drags on, but you might also be eligible for a discounted sewer rate.

SCMU offers a Low Water User sewer rate to inside-City residential customers who average 2.25 CCF or less during four of the five months between December and April. The month with the highest use is deleted from the average. Customers are not eligible for this rate if their average is over 2.25 CCF.

Here's an example of how you can achieve a Low Water User sewer rate:

DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	AVERAGE
2	5	3	2	2	2.25

The Low Water User sewer rate is calculated in May, so the time to act is now. Call SCMU for more details about this offer, or to find out how you can conserve indoors this winter.



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Deputy Director of Operations Terry Tompkins to Retire

THE WATER DEPARTMENT IS SAD TO SAY GOOD-BYE to a good friend and long-time employee. Terry Tompkins, Deputy Director of Operations, bids us farewell in December, retiring after 35 years of service to the Water Department.

Terry started with the department in 1980 as a Water Quality Chemist. After moving into the Water Quality Manager role in 1983, Terry was promoted to Deputy Director in 1991. When asked about the biggest changes he's seen to the water industry in his 35 year career, Terry is quick to point to regulations. "There are a lot of new regulations in the areas of health, employee safety, environmental and water law, and existing regulations have become much greater in scope and much stricter."

As one of the earliest staff with both a technical and scientific background, Terry oversaw many changes resulting in improved stewardship of the watershed, a more proactive approach to managing the water system, and more efficient operation and maintenance of the Department's facilities. Specifically, Terry oversaw the 1986 modernization of the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant; he developed a preventative maintenance program to get the Department out of a "wait til it breaks" mode; he saw the importance of protecting the City's drinking-water watershed and oversaw creation of a workgroup to manage potential impacts to it and regulations for it.

Employee morale has always been important to Terry and he will be missed by his colleagues and staff. When asked what he'll miss the most, Terry responded,

"When people answer 'my fellow employees' it always sounds cliché. But I believe it's genuine for them, and it's certainly genuine for me."



Terry plans to spend more time with family in his retirement, to get back on the golf course, to ride his bike, to catch up with other retired friends, and travel.

Many thanks to Terry Tompkins for his 35 years of service. He will be missed!

LINDA WILSHUSEN

Carrying Water

WHEN I WAS A KID, my dad would chastise us for not finishing our meals with the argument that "starving children would jump for joy for the good food you're wasting." His logic didn't make sense to me — at that age, it was beyond me to figure out how hungry children were going to be able to enjoy that evening's mushy lima beans. It took a few years to get the point: appreciate the luxuries you have.

This drought reminds me of that appreciation. Prior to physically carrying a water bucket from the shower to my thirsty plants, when had I truly appreciated how heavy water is? When had I truly appreciated how easy it is for me to have all the clean, fresh water I need — unlike women in rural Africa, who regularly walk three-plus hours per day to get water for their families? And unlike many parts of the world, where access to clean water is a major source of conflict and suffering.

What if, similar to many parts of the world, we didn't have this sophisticated water distribution system we take for granted? At our current ration of 60 or so gallons per person per day, and assuming women can carry 40 pounds (five gallons) of water per trip (as they do in Africa), it would take each very strong woman twelve (probably long) trips to carry one person's daily Santa Cruz water ration.

Obviously, that's impossible — with or without our current lifestyles. That's why I try to keep in mind that we don't pay for this free, precious natural resource:

What we pay for is the luxury of having clean water conveniently delivered into our homes and businesses.

It's understandable that there's a range of opinions in our community about where we get our water and how much it costs and why some of us pay more for the same water; how we can enhance our supply into the future; and what on earth we're all going to do to accommodate the inevitable vagaries of climate change.

But please, take a moment to look again at your water bill. Think about what you're getting for a couple (or even a few more) dollars a day. Compare it to your other daily or monthly expenditures. Then imagine, like I have, your life without the incredible convenience of clean water via mere flexion of your wrist.

Linda Wilshusen represents non-City customers on the Santa Cruz City Water Commission.