

# SCMU Review

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

No.66 FALL 2018 SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES 212 LOCUST STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831)420-5220 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



**I**T'S HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT THE HOLIDAYS ARE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER. We know many of our customers will be having gatherings

large and small to celebrate. Over the years I've heard about many holiday dinner conversations that have turned sour when sensitive topics like politics, religion, and the Kardashians come up at the table.

*With that in mind, and in the holiday spirit, we thought it would be helpful if we were to provide some noncontroversial dinner table conversation starters for our customers.*

You can impress friends and family members with topics like, "What does it mean to be a 21st century water system?" and "When is being redundant a good thing?" And if it's trivia you're after, you're sure to stump all of your guests when you ask "About how many miles of pipe do you suppose there are in our water system?"

Also in this issue is a preview of the new bill format that will be debuting in 2019, along with clear descriptions of what each of the fees called out on your bill are used for. Your rates aren't changing with the new bill format — we're just providing more information on the bills to make them easier to understand.

Last but far from least, if you're an inside-city utility customer, don't forget to use your Free Service Tags! Each year you're provided with tags that entitle you to an extra bag of refuse, or a free drop off at the Resource Recovery Facility, or a free bulky item pick-up or drop off. Please use the tags — there should be plenty of leaves to rake before the tags expire in December!

Cheers,  
Rosemary Menard  
Water Director

## WHAT IS A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WATER SYSTEM?

**S**IMPLY PUT, OUR GOAL AT THE WATER DEPARTMENT IS TO CREATE A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WATER SYSTEM. What does that mean and what does that look like? It's a water system that's resilient, redundant, and reliable.

### LET'S START WITH RESILIENCY

A resilient system is a system that can adapt to change. It's a system that can accommodate newly emerging water treatment regulations and a system that can adapt to climate changes. It's pipes, pumps and valves that are more flexible to changing conditions; that are easier and less expensive to maintain and replace.

### WHAT DOES REDUNDANT MEAN?

When we talk about "redundancy" in our system, we're talking about a system that doesn't shut down if one water transmission main breaks. Case in point: during the stormy winter of 2017, the water main between the Loch Lomond Reservoir and the treatment plant broke during a landslide, and our supply system was disabled. Perhaps you were around then — when it was raining cats and dogs and the Water Department asked customers to cut back use by 30 percent. What-the?! A redundant system has operational checks and balances that allow it to perform in a wide variety of circumstances.

*A reliable water system is a system that the community can count on to provide enough water to maintain the community's quality of life — during dry times or very wet ones, too.*

A reliable system incorporates conservation best practices, as well as a healthy range of supply sources.



A flocculator undergoing rehab

We try to find a middle ground of providing enough information about what we're up to so that you can feel comfortable with what your water bills are paying for, but not so much detail that your eyes roll back in your sockets. We will be embarking on infrastructure projects big and small during the next decade that will enable our system to be resilient, redundant and reliable. They will have boring names like "tube settlers," "diversion rehab," and — worst of all — "flocculator rehab." But boring as they may sound, these are the makings of a very exciting water system.

If you don't believe us, try showering without water.



COMING JANUARY 2019

# Take a Peek at Your New Water Bill

**YOUR WATER BILL LOOKS DIFFERENT THAN IT DID A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO.** We call out specific fees now that used to be lumped together, like the Infrastructure Reinvestment Fee — as an example. Why do we do that? We think it provides better service to our customers to be completely transparent about what you're paying for.

You're still paying for the same things that you always have — for meter reading, infrastructure repair and replacement, customer service, and loss insurance — but we've broken those fees out now so that you can clearly see what you're being charged for each of those services. If you're not clear on what the charges on your bill mean, maybe the following analogy will help.

## THE READY-TO-SERVE CHARGE

Think of this charge like a car payment. You pay the same amount every month whether you drive your car or not. The Ready-to-Serve charge pays for reading and maintaining your meter, and for billing your account.

## WATER CONSUMPTION CHARGES

Think of this like the costs for fuel. You can control the amount of fuel you use, to some degree. You pay only for what you use. The first tier of residential water consumption charges are designed to cover most household's essential indoor needs, like bathing, flushing and laundry.

## INFRASTRUCTURE REINVESTMENT FEE (IRF)

This fee can be looked at like the costs to maintain a car. There are both small and large costs. The IRF pays for things like replacing distribution mains and rebuilding water tanks. (See Infrastructure article in this issue.)

## RATE STABILIZATION FEE

This is like your car insurance. It's protection against a catastrophic loss from something unexpected happening.

Starting in January 2019, your bill will be getting a face-lift. Same content, different appearance. Why are we doing that? Two main reasons. 1) Customers who live in the City are often confused/unaware that their water charges are part of an overall utility bill that also includes charges for trash and sewer, and 2) we're including late notices on the new bill — there will no longer be separate late notices mailed — also in an effort to eliminate customer confusion.

Here's a sneak preview of the new bill format.\*

**SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
212 LOCUST STREET, STE. D  
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060  
Customer Service: (831) 420-5220  
scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

**1** Service Period: 8/8/2018 - 9/6/2018  
Bill Date: 9/18/2018  
Account Number: 025-00000-089  
Customer Name: JOHN DOE  
Service Address: 123 MAIN ST  
Unpaid Balance: \$234.85  
Current Charges: DUE 10/16/2018  
Total Due: \$234.85  
Amount Enclosed: \$644.30

**2** Account Summary:  
Previous Balance: \$281.32  
Payment Made: \$0.00  
Adjustments: \$28.13  
Unpaid Balance: \$309.45  
Current Charges: \$234.85  
Total Charges: \$544.30

**3** Account Number: 025-00000-089  
Customer Name: JOHN DOE  
Service Address: 123 MAIN ST  
Account Type: SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING  
Service Period: 8/8/2018 - 9/6/2018  
Current Charges due by 3 p.m. on 10/16/2018

**4** LATE NOTICE: Your account is past due! Please pay the unpaid balance by 10/6/2018 to avoid shut off. Make payments online at [www.onlinebiller.com/santacruz/](http://www.onlinebiller.com/santacruz/), or call or visit the office. Call (831) 420-8220 for payment arrangements, bill amortization, or the availability of financial assistance.

**5** Summary Of Charges:  
Refuse, \$93.09, 40%  
Sewer, \$52.63, 22%  
Water, \$89.13, 38%

**6** Meter Information:  
Usage for Meter:  
Previous Read: 63892238  
Current Read: 1519  
Consumption, CCF: 1526  
Consumption, gallons: 7  
Average gallons/day: 5,236  
Franchise Tax @ 3%: 175  
(1 CCF = 100 cubic feet or 748 gals.)

Water Usage Analysis Graph:  
Consumption CCF  
Prior Year (light bars), Current Year (dark bars)  
Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep

\*Sample of an inside-city utility bill

# Your New Utility Bill Format Explained

- 1 NEW IMPROVED PAY STUB**  
All your important information is at a glance, such as your unpaid balance and current charges. Everything you need to make a payment is on the pay stub.
- 2 BALANCE BAR**  
At the top of the bill is a summary of your current balance, payments made and current charges.
- 3 ACCOUNT SUMMARY**  
This shows your current charges, with the due date highlighted in yellow.
- 4 LATE NOTICE**  
This section is where you will be notified if your account is past due. There will no longer be a separate notification. If you see red here, be aware that your account is past due and payment is required immediately.
- 5 SUMMARY OF CHARGES**  
There's an important pie chart (inside-city customers only) in this section, which shows your current charges for each utility — water, refuse or sewer. Water is only one component of your utility service and your bill reflects charges for all utilities.
- 6 BULLETINS**  
Next to each utility charge you will find news and information. The content will change, so please be sure to read the bulletins to stay informed.



## What Do We Do With All This Stuff?

**T**HE CITY HAS A NEW ONLINE AND MOBILE APP TOOL TO ASSIST YOU WITH YOUR "WHAT GOES WHERE" QUESTIONS. The new Recycling Guide will help you reduce, reuse, recycle and dispose of everything from a cardboard box to an old mattress in the most responsible way. Included are waste reduction tips, recycling facts, video links and more.

Early analytics indicate that our community is delving in and reading content on multiple pages. Check it out at [cityofsantacruz.com/recycleright](http://cityofsantacruz.com/recycleright). You can also take the recycle quiz and test your knowledge.



## Recipe for Cutting Food Waste

*"Food waste is a complex problem with losses occurring throughout the supply chain from farm to fork."*

— NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

And the problem is growing.

We are throwing away 50 percent more food now than we did in the 1990s. The reasons for wasted food at home vary but can be placed into four categories: over buying, spoilage, over preparing and uneaten leftovers.

Right now you might have wilted lettuce, blemished fruit or a science experiment growing in a container in your refrigerator. Wasting food misuses the natural resources going into food production and misuses your hard-earned cash.

We can all make little changes in the way we shop for, prepare and store food. Here are four waste reduction strategies from the Environmental Protection Agency's "Food Too Good to Waste" program:

- > **SHOP SMART** Have a plan and buy only what you need.
- > **SMART PREP** Prep now, eat later.
- > **SMART STORAGE** Store fruits, vegetables and other foods properly.
- > **KNOW YOUR LABELS** Look for Best by, Use by, Expired by.

There's no better time to employ food waste prevention strategies than Thanksgiving, which fast approaches. Meantime, you can learn more at [www.EPA.gov](http://www.EPA.gov).

## New 'Master Recycler' Program

**O**UR CITY-TRAINED MASTER RECYCLERS ARE PUTTING THEIR SKILLS TO WORK IN THE COMMUNITY. These volunteers educate and empower friends, neighbors, schools, businesses and local groups to waste less and recycle right! Master Recyclers are ready to assist you with a free recycling bin audit, coaching session or group presentation. To schedule, call (831) 420-5593 or email [lolmalley@cityofsantacruz.com](mailto:lolmalley@cityofsantacruz.com).

Read details of our Master Recyclers' community efforts at [cityofsantacruz.com/recycleright](http://cityofsantacruz.com/recycleright). You can also sign up to become a Master Recycler yourself! The next training session begins in early February and runs for seven consecutive Tuesday evenings.







## Infrastructure, Again?!

**W**E KNOW. YOU'RE TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT INFRASTRUCTURE. Unless you're an engineer or a water wonk, reading about infrastructure is about as exciting as watching paint dry. On the other hand, receiving a water bill with an "Infrastructure Reinvestment Fee" (IRF) and not having a clue what it's paying for is about as pleasurable as biting into a chocolate chip cookie only to find they're raisins.

### SO WHAT IS THAT DOGGONE INFRASTRUCTURE FEE OF YOURS PAYING FOR?

Our system is mostly 50+ years old, which is also the lifespan of much of it, so things break and need to be replaced. As an example of what things cost and what

your IRF dollars are spent on, the average cost to replace pipeline per linear foot is \$416. We replaced 25,639 linear feet (4.86 miles) of water mains and pipelines in six recently completed projects.

*That's well over \$10 million to replace less than five miles of pipeline — and we have over 300 miles of pipeline in our system.*

We also have a treatment plant and a dam that are over 50 years old, and that's where things get particularly expensive. The cost to replace three leaking cement tanks at the treatment plant — which help to provide your treated drinking water — will be over \$26 million. Costs for the Newell Creek Dam inlet/outlet pipe replacement project? Over \$50 million. These are two examples of big-ticket IRF projects, but the full list includes many

projects that come in at well over \$5 million in costs.

Last, in addition to rehabilitation and replacement of aging infrastructure in our system, we are also completing studies that are needed to make a final decision in 2020 on the community's supplemental water supply project. While there is a range of projects under consideration, each and every supply project has a hefty price tag as well.





SCMU Review No. 66, Fall 2018  
 Eileen Cross, Editor  
 Written and published twice a year by  
 City of Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities  
 212 Locust Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
 www.cityofsantacruz.com  
 Customer Service: (831) 420-5220  
 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

PRSR STD  
 US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 SANTA CRUZ, CA  
 PERMIT NO. 11

## Inside: Sneak Preview of the New Utility Bill Format

**S**TARTING IN JANUARY 2019, YOUR UTILITY BILL WILL BE GETTING A FACE-LIFT. Same content, different appearance.

Why are we doing that? Two main reasons. First, customers who live in the City are often confused/unaware that their water charges are part of an overall utility bill that also includes charges for trash and sewer. Second, we're including late notices on the new bill —

there will no longer be separate late notices mailed — also in an effort to eliminate customer confusion. Look inside for a sneak preview of the new bill format.



## City of Santa Cruz Water Department 2017 Consumer Confidence Report

**T**HE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ WATER DEPARTMENT IS PLEASED TO REPORT THAT YOUR DRINKING WATER MEETS all United States Environmental Protection Agency and State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water health standards. The 2017 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is available for your review.

*This report contains important information about the source and quality of your drinking water.*

To view the 2017 Consumer Confidence Report and to learn more about your drinking water, please visit [www.cityofsantacruz.com/ccr2017](http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/ccr2017)

If you would like a paper copy of the 2017 CCR mailed to your mailing address or would like to speak with someone about the report, please call (831) 420-5220.

*Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable. Tradúzcalo o hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.*

Previous Balance	Payment Made	Adjustments	Unpaid Balance	Current Charges	Total Charges
\$201.32	\$0.00	\$20.13	\$201.32	\$224.04	\$425.36

  

Category	Amount	Percentage
Water	\$69.13	38%
Sewer	\$53.63	22%
Refuse	\$93.20	40%

  

Item	Amount
64 Gallon Cart (1)	\$77.25
Utility Tax @ 3.5%	\$6.57
Franchise Tax @ 12%	\$9.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$93.09</b>

  

Item	Amount
Single Family	\$47.20
Utility Tax @ 3.5%	\$4.01
Franchise Tax @ 3%	\$1.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$52.63</b>

  

Item	Amount
Ready to Serve	\$10.18
Contribution Charges (7 CCF)	\$33.30
5 CCF @ \$6.66	\$33.30
2 CCF @ \$17.45	\$34.90
Infrastructure Reinvestment Fee (7 CCF)	\$5.16
5 CCF @ \$1.82	\$9.10
2 CCF @ \$2.73	\$5.46
Rate Stabilization Fee (7 CCF)	\$7.00
7 CCF @ \$1.00	\$7.00
Utility Tax @ 3%	\$6.70
Franchise Tax @ 3%	\$2.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$89.13</b>

  

Usage for Meter	Amount
Previous Read	\$380,238
Current Read	1519
Contribution, CCF	1520
Contribution, gallons	7
Average gallon/day	3,296
(1 CCF = 100 cubic feet or 7.48 gals.)	175