

Water Budget Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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1) What is a water budget?

Answer: A water budget is a specific amount of water allotted to a property or area of a property, in this case for irrigation purposes. The budget is the amount of water that is calculated for the property in order to keep the landscape in a good healthy condition and to avoid wasteful use.

2) Why is Santa Cruz implementing water budget based rates?

Answer: The new rates for irrigation customers are part of a package of new rates for all customers. The Water Department is raising rates in order to fund a major infrastructure reinvestment program. Water budget based rates for irrigation customers were decided upon because it is a rate structure that more closely aligns with the pricing objectives of promoting efficiency and conservation compared with the prior uniform rate structure. For more information on the rate increases please see: <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/water/rates>

3) What is the new water budget based on? What is the calculation?

Answer: The water budget is based upon the amount of irrigated area at the property in square feet, as well as other factors including the plant water needs. The calculation is as follows:

$\{\text{Landscape Area (Sq. Ft.)} * \text{ETo (Ft.)} * \text{Kc (\%)} * (1/\text{irrigation efficiency (\%)})\}/100$

ETo = reference evapotranspiration (in feet). This is the annual depth of water amount that is evaporated and transpired by a reference plant type (fescue grass). The location used for this information is the De Laveaga Golf Course weather station and the annual amount is 3.5 Ft.

Kc= a crop coefficient. This is a factor in the equation that relates to the plant type and how much water each plant type uses. Cool season turf grass uses about 80% of the local ETo while low water use shrubs use approximately 40% of the local ETo. For the purposes of simplifying the equation for all customers, the Kc used here is a blend of shrubs and turf: 0.6.

Irrigation Efficiency (IE): this is a measure of the percent of water applied that is actually used by plants. In other words, the higher the irrigation efficiency, more of the water that is actually applied through an irrigation system gets utilized by plants and is not wasted. The IE used for our budget calculation is 0.70.

4) What are the new water budget based rates?

Answer: the new rate structure for irrigation customers is a three-tiered system; usage up to the water budget is Tier 1, usage above the budget up to 150% over is Tier 2, and usage 150% above budget and higher is Tier 3. As stated previously, the water budget for your account depends on the irrigated square footage and other factors (see question 3). In addition to the volumetric rate, there is also an added component called the *infrastructure reinvestment fee*, which is also charged on a three-tiered system similar to the volumetric rate. For a complete listing of all the rates and charges for irrigation accounts, please click here:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/home/showdocument?id=73151>

5) What is the new infrastructure reinvestment fee?

Answer: The Infrastructure Reinvestment Fee is a new charge related to our funding of capital improvements. It is specifically for pay-as-you-go capital investment and debt service for capital expenditures. The new Infrastructure Reinvestment Fee is specifically designed to help customers understand what they're investing in and paying for, and is particularly relevant in light of the next five years' focus on major work on the City's water infrastructure.

6) How do I know what my budget is?

Answer: As stated in Question 3 above, your water budget depends on the square footage of irrigated area at your property. Each irrigation meter account is considered separately, so each meter/account will have a budget associated with it. To find out your budget, please use our calculator here:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/water/monthly-water-costs-calculator/landscape-water-budgets>. If you don't know the square

footage of irrigated area at your site, please call the water conservation office at 831-420-5230 and we will assist you.

7) What happens if one exceeds the budget in a given month?

Answer: The water budget rate structure is designed to encourage customers to stay within their monthly budget. If your usage exceeds the monthly budget, you will be charged in either Tier 2 or Tier 3 depending on how much over budget your usage is. Billing is on a monthly basis, so each month we assess whether your usage is at or above budget and charge accordingly.

8) How does the service period line up with the water budget?

Answer: As of June 1st 2019, the water budget month will align with the billing period. In other words, it is the case that the usage period (billing period) is the same as the calendar month of the water budget. If the billing period is May 1st to May 31st, the water budget for the Month of May will be used. There are no longer cases of the billing period spanning two months for irrigation accounts.

9) Can water be "banked" or transferred from month-to-month?

Answer: No, water cannot be banked or transferred between months. There is a monthly budget so each month we assess whether your usage is at or above budget and charge accordingly.

10) Can water be "banked" or transferred from account to account on a large property?

Answer: No, water cannot be banked or transferred between accounts. Each account is associated with a specific irrigation meter and each meter has its own budget. The budget for each meter is dependent on the square footage of irrigated area for that specific meter.

11) What happens to sites that were already enrolled in the WaterFluence Program?

Answer: Sites that are enrolled in WaterFluence will continue be in the program and receive their monthly water use report. The water budget provided by the

WaterFluence program will continue to serve as a best-practice guide for what to do but the Water Department budget will be the basis for billing purposes.

12) Can I update the square footage of irrigated area at my site in order to update the water budget?

Answer: Yes! If you believe our office has incorrect information regarding the square footage of irrigated area at your property for the basis of the water of the water budget, please call us to discuss. The water conservation office can be reached at 831-420-5230.