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Ventura's Water Shortage Emergency Stage 3 Drought Conditions

The Ventura City Council declared a Stage 3 Water Shortage in September, 2014. Since then the City has conducted a number of outreach activities to encourage conservation. The City has not achieved our goal of 20% conservation. The next step is the implementation of the proposed Water Shortage Rates that are being noticed to the community for a hearing before the City Council on June 8, 2015.

Frequently Asked Questions

What Water Shortage Stage are we currently in?

In September, 2014, the City Council declared that Ventura is in water shortage Stage 3 which calls for mandatory 20% reduction. The City remains at this stage.

What does a 20% reduction in water use look like?

For outdoor water use, the average Californian uses 196 gallons of water per day and 30-60% of their water outdoors. To reduce by 20% or 38 gallons per day implement the following simple lifestyle changes:

- Use a broom to clean outdoor areas (Saves 8-18 gallons per minute)
- Adjust sprinkler to water plants not driveway (Saves 12-15 gallons each time you water)
- Install a "smart" controller (Saves 24+ gallons per day)
- Use mulch on soil surface (Saves 20-30 gallons per 1000sq. ft)
- Water plants early in the AM (Saves 25 gallons)
- Install drip irrigation (Saves 15 gallons)

What is Ventura Water doing to offset the drought?

In 2014, Ventura Water customers saved 7% overall from the previous year. So far, we are tracking along that same level of conservation even though we are in a mandatory 20% cutback.

The City has taken the following actions to address ongoing drought conditions:

- Declared mandatory 20% reduction goals for water users, which is a Stage 3 in the City's Water Shortage Event Contingency Plan.
 - Prohibit outdoor irrigating more than 2 days a week.
 - Prohibit outdoor irrigating from 9am to 6pm.
 - Enforce current water waste prohibitions

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- Saved 20% of typical water usage in the City Parks.
- Increased offering free water surveys to customers.
- Educated more than 400 customers via direct mailing and 75 to 100 participants in each water efficient gardening class.
- Funded additional capital projects that increase water supply sources and infrastructure redundancy.
- Pioneered a Potable Reuse Pilot Project.
- Developed, and soon implementing, a Water Wise Landscape Incentive Program.
- Worked collaboratively with our top 100 users to maximize water use efficiency.
- Provided ongoing educational outreach to residents, businesses, and schools.

What is a drought?

Typically, a drought is defined as three or more consecutive years of less-than-average rainfall. Droughts can be short-lived or slowly develop and last for extended periods of time. Below-average precipitation one year may put water supplies in a deficit, which can grow the following year, thus intensifying the drought.

Are we really in a drought?

Yes! Currently we are in the fourth consecutive year of a drought with no immediate end in sight. Locally our water supply has been impacted; Water flows have diminished in the Ventura River, restrictions have been placed on local groundwater wells and Lake Casitas is below 50% capacity.

How often does California experience significant droughts?

Multi-year droughts of statewide scale occur relatively infrequently, as shown below.

Multi-Year droughts of large-scale extent since 1900 (Based on statewide runoff):

1918-1920	1976-1977
1923-1926	1987-1992
1928-1935	2001-2002
1947-1950	2007-2009
1959-1962	2012-????

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How does the Executive Order from Governor Brown affect Ventura residents?

The proposed 25% water reductions by the Governor will impact all urban water suppliers, which includes Ventura. The State Water Resources Board (SWRCB) is tasked with implementing the Governor's Executive Order; the current proposal is for the City to reduce our water production by 16% from 2013 for the same time period.

California is in its fourth straight year with below average precipitation. Statewide the snowpack water content is just 20 % of average for this time of year. With these conditions water agencies across the state are reporting limited water supplies. In July, 2014, the SWRCB adopted statewide mandatory conservation measures to minimize water waste and preserve stored water reserves in case drought conditions continue. These conservation measures are primarily aimed at reducing how much water is wasted outdoors, where more than half of the water is used at a typical home. The state regulations focus on ornamental landscapes and turf grass that use potable water for irrigation.

More recently, on April 1, 2015, for the first time in state history, the Governor directed the SWRCB to implement mandatory water reductions in cities and towns across California to reduce urban water usage by 25 percent. This savings amounts to approximately 1.5 million acre-feet of water over the next nine months or nearly as much as is currently in Lake Oroville. Actions to save water proposed by the Governor included streamlining the state's drought response efforts and investing in new technologies to make the state more resilient to drought.

[Click here to view the governor's executive order.](#)

Are these proposed Water Shortage Rates fair?

Yes, a 13 member Ventura Water customer task force spent five months listening to community input and determining the best way to encourage water conservation and at the same time reward those customers who have already demonstrated extreme conservation. The goal of these rates is to encourage water conservation in a prolonged drought and maintain the delicate balance between supply and demand of our precious water supplies. The rate structure focuses primarily on the reduction of outside water use instead of interior residential use.

How will the Water Shortage Rates affect me if I have been conserving over the last year?

The 13 member water shortage task force placed a high priority on protecting those who already conserve water. One of the primary goals of the water shortage rates was to insure that lifeline usage (0-6 HCF) would be not be impacted by higher rates.

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Will I still need to reduce my use by the same percentage as the user who has been over-consuming water?

No, the mandatory use reduction is applied Citywide and is not individualized. If you have already been conserving, thank you for doing your part!

Why are businesses being asked to conserve less than residential customers?

Since water usage in businesses is more “process water” than outdoor irrigation, there is concern that cutting back usage will impact economic development. Our conservation reduction goal is aimed at reducing outdoor water usage. So our biggest conservation effort will be focused on limiting outdoor water irrigation, which is reflected in our proposed Water Shortage Rates. For example, restaurants that rely on water to conduct their operations would have a very hard time meeting the same water conservation goal of a single family home that has more “discretionary” uses for water (i.e. watering lawns). However, restaurants are required to only serve water on request which saves not only water in the glass, but also the ice and amount of water to be used in washing the glasses. At the same time, non-residential customers with irrigation meters will be asked to conserve more on that usage and a new non-residential irrigation meter will be put in place.

What if the proposed Water Shortage Rates don't pass?

If these rates fail to pass, funding of capital improvement projects, such as rehabilitating and developing new wells, developing new sources of supply and replacing aging/failing pipelines will cease. Funding daily operations and maintenance activities will also be compromised. This will in turn mean even less reliability in delivering potable drinking water. The City may also incur surcharges for taking more water than we are contracted from Lake Casitas or from the groundwater basin. The proposed rate structure is designed to further water conservation efforts so such surcharges are kept to a minimum. Any such surcharges would be passed on to our customers, which would likely be higher than the proposed water shortage rates.

If you are outside the City limits do you pay the same rate?

The water shortage rates apply to all Ventura Water customers. In addition, water customers outside the City limits pay 0.60 cents more per hundred cubic feet (HCF).

How do I protest vote against these rates?

If you wish to protest the proposed increases, you must do so in writing prior to the close of the Public Hearing on June 8, 2015. Either the owner of the parcel or the person receiving the service for which the fee is charged may submit a written protest, but only one protest per parcel will be counted. Written protests must be received at the

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Ventura City Clerk's Office at 501 Poli Street, Room 204, Ventura, California 93002-0099 prior to the Public Hearing or at the hearing. Faxed, emailed or photocopied protests will not be counted. A rate protest form is available at the City Clerk's office or online at www.cityofventura.net/water/rates.

Why does the City of Ventura continue to issue building permits during a prolonged drought?

The City estimates the number of housing units to be developed per year when evaluating new demand on our water supply. With water conserving requirements associated with new construction, the water demand is less than some older homes. Recently with the Governor's Executive Order, new construction is required to install only efficient irrigation systems. A complete moratorium on new construction would only have a small impact on meeting our overall mandatory 20% reduction. Conversely, a complete moratorium would likely have consequences on the City's ability to meet new housing and business needs, which can have a severe and long-lasting effect on the local economy. The City's Water Shortage Event Contingency Plan does take into consideration at higher levels of conservation, a moratorium on the issuance of building permits.

What will happen to development projects if we move into Stage 4?

If the City declares a Stage 4 Water Shortage, all proposed development projects would have to demonstrate that their water demand impacts are neutral in order to be approved. This stage will require projects to include active water rights or demonstrate extreme water use efficiency. Currently, there is no fee in place to set aside for future water development.