



## **Voluntary 10% Water Conservation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1. Why are Ventura Water customers being requested to reduce water usage by at least 10%?**  
This is a voluntary step to stretch our local water supplies. Due to the third year of dry conditions and the lack of normal winter rainfall:

- The water level of the Ventura River, a primary water supply during the rainy season, is low and is expected to continue to drop.
- A number of groundwater wells have required urgent maintenance which is limiting our water supply operations. Also, the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency approved an [emergency ordinance](#) in April that restricts extraction from groundwater basins, suspends the use of conservation credits, and reduces the City's allocation by 6 percent.
- Ventura's other water supply, Lake Casitas, is at less than 60% of capacity. We have been alerted that if the lake level drops to 50%, the Casitas Municipal Water District (operator of Lake Casitas) will begin allocating water. Without more rain, this may happen in October or November.

**2. Did the rain this spring help Ventura's water situation?**

The water levels in the Ventura River and Lake Casitas were helped but those gains are quickly being erased by the warmer than normal summer season. Casitas is the backup supply for the Ojai area and a few of the local communities normally supplied by groundwater wells continue to receive Casitas water. Casitas officials have alerted us that when the lake drops to 50% capacity, which is estimated to be this fall, they will issue water allocations. It is likely that the Ventura City Council will declare a water emergency at this point and implement a mandatory water reduction plan.

**3. If Casitas drops to 50% capacity, what is Ventura's plan?**

The City's adopted [2010 Urban Water Management Plan](#) provides a framework for five stages of water shortages. The first stage is a voluntary reduction, which is where we have been since February. Stages two through five incorporate mandatory reductions and restrictions. Ventura Water will return to the City Council with implementation options if further reductions become necessary.

**4. Could Ventura run out of water?**

If water supplies are seriously restricted in the future, it is possible that our community may need more water than available. The purpose of the Water Shortage Contingency Plan (contained in the [2010 Urban Water Management Plan](#)) is match how much water is available with how much water our customers use. As our supplies drop, a corresponding reduction in usage (also called water demand) will be necessary to maintain a balance between supply and demand. Stages two through five will direct specific mandatory activities by the City and our customers to overall reduce water use to stay within our supply limits.

**5. Weather predictions are talking about an El Nino rain pattern this winter. If we get more rain than average, will Ventura's water supply be OK?**

Drought cycles are part of Southern California's climate history. It is estimated that our seriously depleted lakes, rivers and underground aquifers will take a number of years of significant rainfall amounts to recover. El Nino annual rain levels vary widely and some years actually produce less than normal rain amounts. In addition, the high pressure ridge that blocked many storms from reaching California this past winter may return. Since Ventura's water supplies are only



## **Voluntary 10% Water Conservation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

replenished by rain, drought or no drought, our community needs to develop more sustainable water supply solutions and become the most water efficient community possible to safeguard our water resources, public health, and economic future.

### **6. I understand that water and wastewater rates are going up after July 1. Will my rates go up again because of the drought?**

The updated Cost of Service Study, the basis of the new rates, built in a 2% annual reduction in water usage. If less water is used than projections, Ventura Water's revenues will be reduced but partially offset by savings due to less treatment and water purchase costs. There are several short-term options that could be used to manage the revenue loss, which includes use of reserve funds or delaying some capital improvement projects. However, rate increases and/or modifications may be needed to keep the utility fiscally stable during a prolonged mandatory water reduction situation.

### **7. How much water does the average household use?**

In Ventura, a typical residential household uses approximately 21 hundred cubic feet (100 cubic feet = 748 gallons = 15 full bathtubs) or 15,708 gallons every two months. A 10% reduction equals 1,570 gallons bi-monthly or 785 gallons per month.

### **8. What can I do to use less water?**

Reviewing your water bill is a good first step to understand how much water is being used. Fixing leaks both indoors and outdoors is the easiest step to reduce water use. One leaking toilet can waste between 300 to 60,000 gallons per month and even a slow drip from a faucet can use 450 gallons per month. Outdoor leaks from irrigation systems are also responsible for a lot of water waste. For more information, including a helpful calculator, visit [www.cityofventura.net/water/efficiency](http://www.cityofventura.net/water/efficiency).

Free water saving devices such as showerheads, garden hose shut-off nozzles, and faucet aerators are available to residents at the Ventura Water booth during community special events, at City Hall Treasury and Building Permit offices, or by contacting Customer Care at [myvtawater@cityofventura.net](mailto:myvtawater@cityofventura.net) or (805) 667-6500. Most of these items and more are also available in the Environmental Sustainability Kits offered free to residents this summer by contacting the City of Ventura Environmental Sustainability Division at (805) 652-4525.

### **9. I am already doing everything I can to use as little water as possible. What happens if my household can't reduce by 10%?**

This is a voluntary measure at this point and it is hoped that some customers will be able to reduce more than 10%. Since 40-60% of water is used outdoors, checking and updating irrigation systems to make them more efficient is our top suggestion for saving water.

### **10. I have to water my lawn more because it is so dry. How can I keep my lawn alive and use less water?**

Lawns are commonly over-watered and there are a number of strategies customers can use to help their landscapes through the drought. The top recommendation is to reduce the number of watering minutes and times per week one step at a time and watch your landscape for signs of stress. You may be surprised at how little water it really needs.

If you have been considering alternative landscaping, such as native gardens or native grass or even synthetic lawns, then this may be a good time to make the switch. Visit [www.cityofventura.net/water/landscape](http://www.cityofventura.net/water/landscape) for more ideas.



## **Voluntary 10% Water Conservation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **11. Why did Ventura request a 10% reduction instead of the 20% announced by Governor Brown in January?**

Ventura relies on local water resources only. We do not receive any water from the State Water Project. Our water situation is not the same as other communities around the State who are enacting a wide range of responses as warranted by their individual water situation.

### **12. What are “groundwater wells” and how do they help our Ventura water supply?**

Ventura Water operates a number of wells that draw water from underground aquifers. This water primarily serves the City’s eastside, which is outside of the Casitas District. Several wells have been taken out of service for urgent repairs, which limits our current options. A replacement well is under construction but will not be operational until the summer. Reducing water demand will help stretch these supplies.

### **13. If we don’t have enough water, will Ventura still allow developments to be built?**

Historically, no new service connections have been approved during periods of extreme drought. The City Council has the discretion to make the appropriate policy decision regarding development at any time. As a result of the [2013 Comprehensive Water Supply Report](#), the City Council adopted a new policy to track water supply demands annually of proposed developments to align with water supply availability and reliability.

### **14. I live in the Casitas District in Ventura and pay an assessment to Casitas on my property taxes. Are there services available to me from Casitas?**

Property owners who live in the Casitas District, generally the area west of Mills Road, can request a free water audit and take advantage of a number of rebate offers. Visit [www.casitaswater.org](http://www.casitaswater.org) for more information.

### **15. I live in an apartment complex and water is included in my rent. Does this apply to me?**

Yes, if you live in the City of Ventura, you are also requested to use less water where possible. Approximately 25% of our residential customers live in multi-family complexes.

### **16. How can I get my water use information?**

Customers can sign-up to access their account information and water use history online at [www.venturawater.net](http://www.venturawater.net) or contact Ventura Water’s Customer Care at [myvtawater@cityofventura.net](mailto:myvtawater@cityofventura.net) or (805) 667-6500.

### **17. I thought that water waste was already prohibited. I see lots of neighbors who let their sprinklers run too long and the water drains into the street. What is Ventura Water doing to prevent this from happening?**

The Water Conservation Ordinance (Division 22 – Public Utilities – Chapter 22.170) in City of Ventura’s Municipal Code prohibits water waste. This includes activities such as: irrigation overruns, leaks, hoses without shut off devices, fountains not using recycled water, washing hard surfaces with water, serving of water in restaurants without being requested by customers, and any other activity that wastes water without reasonable purpose.

If water waste is identified, we recommend that neighbors look out for each other and talk directly to the neighbor or the business owner about the water waste issue. Since most irrigation systems are run early in the morning, many people are unaware until they receive their bill that there is a broken sprinkler or other leak problem. Alternatively, customers can contact Customer Care at [myvtawater@cityofventura.net](mailto:myvtawater@cityofventura.net) or (805) 667-6500 with the address and specific information about the problem and we’ll follow-up.



## Voluntary 10% Water Conservation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 18. What is the City doing to reduce their water use?

Our Parks Department has been working to use water wisely for many years. During these dry conditions, watering priorities have been set for park irrigation use: sports fields (for safety reasons), high-visibility or aesthetic areas, and then low activity or passive areas. Some residents are noticing that the grass in many low activity parks areas has become brown. Also, the City uses a preventative maintenance strategy to identify and proactively repair leaks, and City facilities have been retrofitted over the years with low water use devices such as low flow toilets, automatic shutoff faucets and timers on showerheads. Window washing has also been reduced to once a year for City facilities. The Fire Department is limiting water used during training exercises and engine washing.

### 19. In California, we experience drought cycles regularly. What is Ventura's long-term plan to make sure we have enough water in the future?

In 2013, Ventura Water presented the [2013 Comprehensive Water Resources Report](#) to City Council to discuss water supply pressures and efforts to integrate development planning. In accordance with an annual review, Ventura Water updated the Report and presented the [2014 Comprehensive Water Resources Report](#) to City Council on May 5, 2014. In addition, Ventura Water has been conducting [special studies](#) to determine the best use of the water cleaned by the Ventura Water Reclamation Facility and currently released into the Santa Clara River Estuary. These two efforts are leading to the development of an Integrated Water Resource Management Plan for Ventura with the goals of improving the eastside water quality, reusing the water from the Ventura Water Reclamation Facility and creating a road map for Ventura's water sustainability.

### 20. Why didn't Ventura build a desalination plant that was voted on by the community in the early 1990s?

The drought was declared over following several years of rains and the plan for a desalination plant was shelved due to the high cost. However, a Biennial Water Supply Report was required from this point forward to project a 10-year planning horizon for Ventura's water sources to allow enough notice to develop new water supplies, if deemed the right time.

The [2014 Comprehensive Water Resources Report](#) projected that water demand could exceed our available water supplies depending on a variety of conditions, including drought. As foreseen in 1994, a new water supply would be needed in the future and an Integrated Water Resource Management Plan will provide the vehicle to help Ventura decide how to achieve water sustainability for our community.

### 21. How can I stay informed about Ventura's water issues?

Ventura Water customers have many ways to stay connected:

- Visit [www.venturawater.net](http://www.venturawater.net) and signup to receive Pipeline, our monthly e-Newsletter
- Like us at [www.facebook.com/venturawater](https://www.facebook.com/venturawater)
- Follow us at [www.twitter.com/venturawaterCA](https://www.twitter.com/venturawaterCA)
- Watch us at [www.youtube.com/venturawater](https://www.youtube.com/venturawater)
- Read our blog at [www.venturawater.org](http://www.venturawater.org)
- Contact Customer Care at (805) 667-6500 or [myvtawater@cityofventura.net](mailto:myvtawater@cityofventura.net).