

## Water Rate Increases Considered at Public Hearing on May 21

The Ventura City Council encourages you to participate at a Public Hearing at the regular Council meeting on [Monday, May 21 at 6 p.m.](#)

As outlined in the notice mailed to all Ventura Water customers and property owners in early April, the Public Hearing is an opportunity to speak directly to the Council about the proposed two-year rate increases as well as the deadline to submit a written protest vote.

The Public Hearing represents one of the final steps before rates can be increased. The process to develop sustainable rates to support our vital utilities began last October with the formation of a nine-member citizen Advisory Committee of Ventura volunteers to offer community input into a new Cost of Service and Rate Design Study. Following a series of public meetings, the Advisory Committee brought their recommendations to the City Council in late February and the study was finalized in March.

The proposed rates are projected to generate the necessary revenues to support a capital renewal program for Ventura's aging infrastructure and cover increases in electricity, supplies and water charges from other agencies.

Ventura's last formal study was performed more than 20 years ago and the recent review revealed that usage patterns have shifted between customer classes. As a result, some customers will notice both increases and decreases in the water and wastewater rates for the first year. To assist customers in estimating the impact to their individual bill, a calculator tool is available at [www.cityofventura.net/water/rates](http://www.cityofventura.net/water/rates) as well as complete information about the proposed rates. If you have any questions or need help, please contact Customer Care at 805-667-6500 or [myvtawater@cityofventura.net](mailto:myvtawater@cityofventura.net).

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## Creating a Healthy, Ocean Friendly Landscape

"Southern Californians value rain but when rain falls on hard surfaces such as driveways and streets, it washes pollutants like pesticides, fertilizers, oils and animal waste directly into our storm drain system and out to our rivers and oceans," says Jill Sarick, Environmental Specialist for the City of Ventura.

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Dear Customer:

Water and wastewater organizations like Ventura Water are unique in the business world. We are an Enterprise agency and 100 percent financially supported by rates paid directly by our customers, but we are operated and guided within a government structure. And, unlike most businesses, our rates are set to generate enough revenues to meet expenses and do not include a "profit."

Another big difference is that we are always trying to encourage you to use less of our products. We believe that smart water use will lead us to a more sustainable future, both for people and the environment. So, how can you be a partner? I have three suggestions:

1. Install water-efficient fixtures and appliances. No additional actions are needed and you save water and money every time you run the dishwasher or flush.

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“One way homeowners can combat this stormwater runoff is to use landscaping best practices developed by the Surfrider Foundation referred to as ‘CPR — Conservation, Permeability and Retention’ — and revive the health of our watersheds and oceans by transforming yards into Ocean Friendly Gardens.”

Surfrider’s Ocean Friendly Gardens programs and workshops, including the recent March through May free workshop series in association with the City of Ventura, help educate the community in CPR principles.

## Tips for Creating a Healthy Landscape with CPR

### 1. Cultivate a healthy soil by composting

Composting organic matter from kitchens and gardens creates a nutrient-rich soil amendment we can add to our gardens and flowerbeds. This material is high in nutrients and good bacteria and fungi, which enrich the soil and ensure healthy, water-holding soil that improves our gardens and watershed as well.

### 2. Water wisely

Regularly test the moisture level in your soil. When you step on the grass, does it spring back when you remove your foot? If so, it’s receiving a sufficient amount of water. If it lies flat, water more.

From spring leading into summer, when the temperatures start to rise, rather than increase landscape irrigation watering times, a better water-wise, eco-friendly practice is to schedule a series of shorter watering times. Let water soak into the ground from a previous session. Schedule watering one to two hours apart.

Every month, check your irrigation system for broken heads, misaligned sprinklers and water that maybe deflected by overgrown plants or shrubs. Invest in a weather-based irrigation controller or smart controller that uses local climate data and your landscape needs to determine water needs.

### 3. Conserve water by capturing it and reduce your water bill

Use rain barrels and chains to redirect falling rain back into your garden. This benefits your garden and saves you money too.

### 4. Landscape with native plants

Landscape with plants that thrive naturally in the local climate with little water. Examples of low maintenance shrubs, ground cover and perennials can be found at [ventura.watersavingplants.com](http://ventura.watersavingplants.com).

For more information, visit: [www.surfrider.org/ventura](http://www.surfrider.org/ventura).



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2. Tune-up your landscape irrigation system. With 40-60 percent of our water used outdoors, a little maintenance might generate some hefty water and money savings. Better yet, join the growing trend by replacing water-thirsty yards with Ocean Friendly gardens – save water and protect our waterways at the same time. That’s a good deal!
3. Take a second look at your bottled water purchases to save yourself some cash. Ventura Water costs less than half a penny a gallon, meets strict regulations and is delivered directly to your tap.

But, like good businesses, Ventura Water is focused on our customers’ needs. During the yearlong journey to develop rates, we hope that the Advisory Committee and the public process helped you understand the importance of sustainable rates. While it is very complicated, the purpose of a Cost of Service study is to develop rates that are equitable for all customer classes. The Advisory Committee was very conscious of the tough economy but recognized that our water and aging systems must be financially supported to keep them reliable. Read the study to learn more about the “how and why” of the proposed rates at [www.cityofventura.net/water/rates](http://www.cityofventura.net/water/rates).

We are your local water business, as unique as you are, and our goal is to continue to be Ventura’s “trusted life source for generations.” Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Shana Epstein, General Manager