

Opinion

Sentinel Editorial

10-14-77

Water Conservation

The report from City Water Director Morris Allen on the results of the 1977 rationing program in the area served by the Santa Cruz City Water department shows just how well the citizenry responded to the need to conserve water.

Total water conservation far exceeded goals set by the city, Allen reported this week in a proposal to end water rationing for the year.

In his report, Allen stressed the need for continued thoughtful conservation efforts, but without the burden of the rationing regulations.

Despite a number of problems in various sectors, the water rationing throughout the area has been handled with considerable class.

In the city service area, customers used 1,391 acre feet less than the goals set by the department. The savings totaled 459 million gallons.

Compared to normal use, the savings were 1.514 billion gallons, truly an exceptional total.

In general, water conservation efforts were exceptional throughout the water-short area, including San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley and the Mid-County as well as the north coast.

While the one early rainfall and the fog have been helpful to gardens, the rainy season hasn't started yet, although the heavy water use period is just about over.

While there are all kinds of forecasts for how wet this winter may be, one might presume that the rainfall will be heavier than normal after the lengthy dry seasons. At least, we all hope so.

Conservation has been an outstanding success, but it has not been without its problems, especially in sectors where water use has been increasing.

It was difficult for restaurants and motels with increased use and it had a severe affect upon home gardens and vegetable growers.

In many instances, lawns have become a disaster and only a sizeable increase in rainfall will pave the way for re-seeding efforts next year.

However, we would guess that some of the conservation methods will be continued even if water becomes abundant in the months ahead.

It is going to take time for water reserves to be restored, especially in sectors where the water tables have been seriously affected.

But the drought period should create greater efforts to develop a more satisfactory storage program in the entire area, now served only by the Loch Lomond reservoir in the city system.

It is all too obvious that a more concentrated effort for cooperation among all the water agencies in the area will be required if we are to provide ample storage for future dry periods in the area.

It is also evident that there is a major need for better cooperation between some of the agencies, including a program designed to get the City of Santa Cruz and the county working towards mutual aid rather than a collision course.

Water recycling may become a more improved program with the latest move by the state although it appears it will be expensive as well as requiring greater technological advances.

Water should not become the field for new political gamesmanship. We need far more adequate storage than is now available to handle the present population.

The people have done an extraordinary job. Now it is up to government to see if it can do as well.