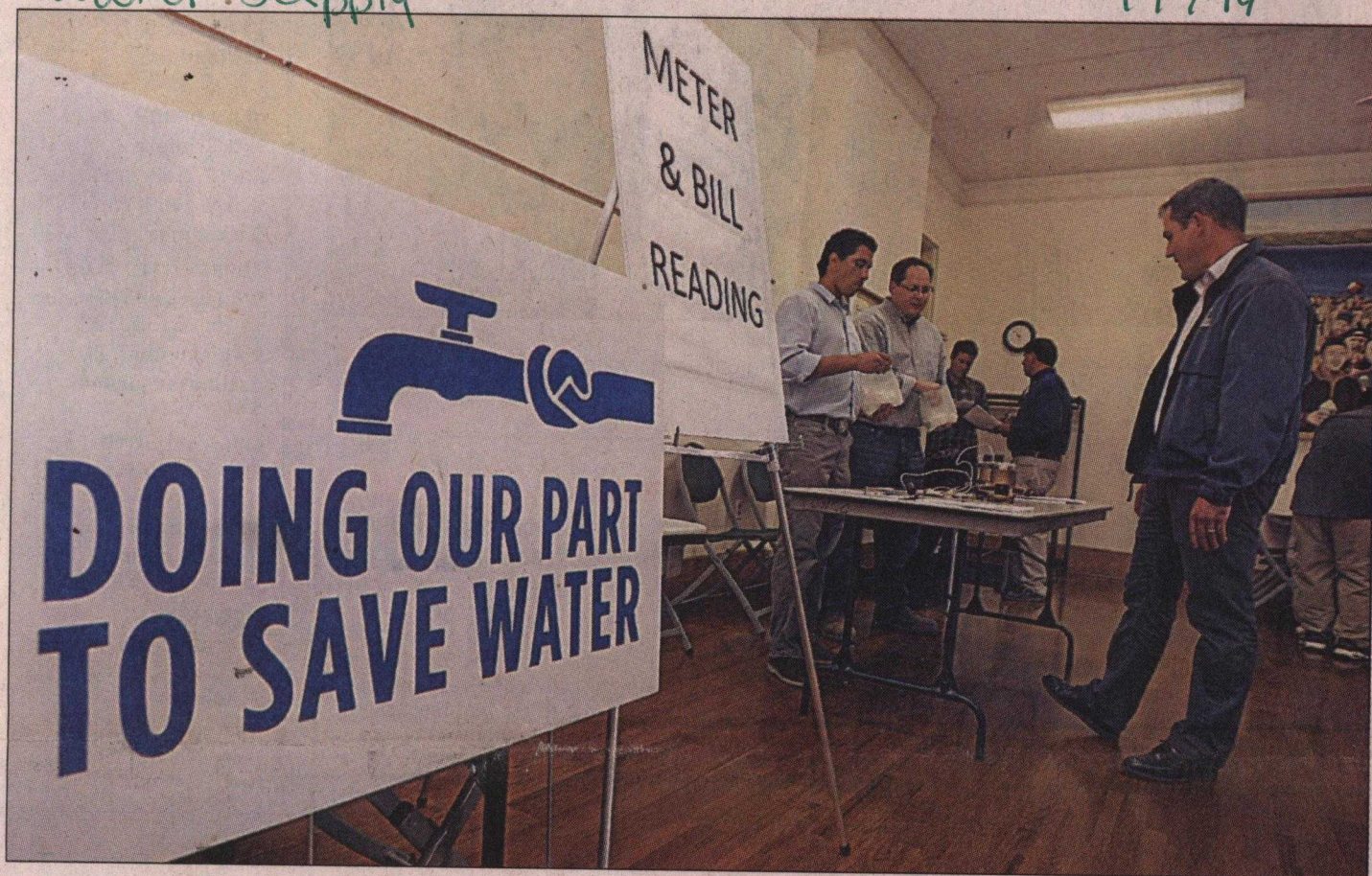


RESIDENTS TACKLE WATER RATIONING

Water Supply

4.17.14



Santa Cruz City water officials set up shop at the Loudon Nelson Community Center Wednesday where they showed city residents how to decipher their water bills and read a meter.

PHOTOS BY DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Mandate: Penalties for overuse start May 1 in Santa Cruz

By Stephen Baxter
sbaxter@santacruzsentinel.com
@sbaxter_sc on Twitter

SANTA CRUZ » If the region's drought seemed abstract, it's about to hit home for Santa Cruz residents.

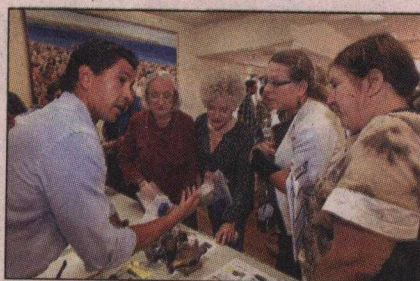
As part of city leaders' response to two years of meager rain, water rationing will start May 1 and fines will be levied monthly against households that use more than their allotted amount of water. Wednesday evening, city water leaders spoke to a few dozen residents at a workshop at the Loudon Nelson Community Center about how to read home water meters and understand water bills.

The idea is to have customers track their water use and cut their water use, especially outdoors.

"We're trying to supply enough water for human health and safety needs with indoor use, for instance, while keeping enough in reserve if we have another dry year," said Toby Goddard, administrative services manager for the Santa Cruz Water Department.

Starting in May, each single-family home in the Santa Cruz Water Department service area will get 10 "CCF" units

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Neal Christen talks with Bernice Robertson, Zena Krakowsky, Lynn Curtin and Debra Buchinsky-Valdes Wednesday at Loudon Nelson Community Center when city residents learned to decipher water bills and read their meters from Santa Cruz water officials.

WATER SAVING TIPS

Fix: Leaks should be fixed on all fixtures and pipes, indoors and outdoors.

Install: Showerheads and sinks should have aerators to limit water flow. Aerators are free at the Santa Cruz Water Department at 212 Locust St., Suite B, in Santa Cruz. They also can be found at hardware stores.

Limit: Showers should be limited to five minutes or less, and dishwashers and washing machines should only run with full loads. Landscaping sprinkler systems should be turned off, and all hoses must have spray nozzles.

Check: Track your water use on your water bill at <http://goo.gl/Z6ilfu>

SOURCE: Santa Cruz Water Department

Poll: Bay Area residents push environmental regs

By Paul Rogers
progers@mercurynews.com

Nearly nine out of 10 Californians say the state is suffering from a "serious water shortage," according to a new poll that confirms widespread concern over the lack of rain, diminished Sierra snowpack and low reservoir levels after three years of drought.

But deep, decades-old divisions remain across the state on how to solve the dilemma, the statewide Field Poll of 1,000 registered voters found — with the biggest differences being between the Bay Area and the Central Valley.

While Central Valley residents strongly support building new dams and waiving environmental rules to pump more water, Bay Area residents were the biggest backers of retaining environmental protections and least supportive of new dams.

Some of that is simple politics, experts said. The Central Valley has a greater percentage of people who vote Republican and identify as conservative than the Bay Area, which has more Democrats and people who identify as liberal.

The economy is also key: The Central

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Water

FROM PAGE 1

— or 1,000 cubic feet of water — per month for all cooking, cleaning, bathing, laundry and landscaping. The allotment is designed for a family of four.

If a household uses more water than that, the ratepayer will be fined \$25 for the first unit greater than the allotment and \$50 for each additional unit.

For apartment complexes with two to four units, each household gets seven water units before fines are levied against the water customer. Apartments with five to 20 units get six water units before they are fined.

Goddard said that water bills in April will include allotment amounts for multi-unit properties.

The fines come from a Feb. 25 Santa Cruz City Council decision to cut the city's water use by 25 percent and prepare for a potential continuation of the drought. The council declared a Stage 3 water shortage emergency, which triggered the fines.

Wednesday, water department leaders said that less than half of the roughly 20,000 homes in its service area have been using enough water to be fined. Those households will receive a letter in the next few

On the Net: To view pictures and a description of how to read a water meter, visit www.SantaCruzSentinel.com and click on this story.

weeks that warns them of the fines, said Goddard.

Luckily, many residents can trim their water use by making some hardware fixes and some changes in routine.

"I'm trying very hard already," said Lynn Curtin, a 57-year-old who attended Wednesday's workshop.

Curtin said she lives in an aging house on the Upper Westside, and she wanted to understand how to read her water meter to track her conservation efforts.

"Every little bit helps," she said.

Water leaders said water meters are similar to car odometers, with numbers that spin up as water is used. Residents can look on their bill to find the most recent meter reading. It's the four-digit number under the "current" heading below the water consumption graph on the bill.

Then, residents can compare that number to the four left digits on the meter and see how much has been used. Water leaders recommend that customers read their meter and write down the number weekly to track their progress.

To cut down on water use,

WATER RATIONING 101

What: New water rationing rules mean that typical single-family homes will be allotted 10 water units each month, or 249 gallons of water per household per day the Santa Cruz Water Department service area. As a penalty for overuse, water customers will be charged \$25 for the first water unit greater than the allotment and \$50 for each additional unit.

When: Rationing starts May 1, fines appear on June bills.

Why: California and Santa Cruz County are in the second year of a drought. Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency in January that called on state residents to trim water use by 20 percent. On Feb. 25, the Santa Cruz Council adopted a Stage 3 water shortage emergency, which triggered rationing.

Information: Visit www.CityofSantaCruz.com/drought

leaks should be fixed on all plumbing fixtures, and showerheads and sinks should have aerators to limit water flow, water leaders said. Leaks can be checked by turning off all water in a home, then checking the meter to see if it's still running.

Showers should be limited to five minutes or less, and dishwashers and washing machines should only be run with full loads, water officials said. Landscaping sprinkler systems should be turned off.

Aerators are free at the Santa Cruz Water Department at 212 Locust St., Suite B, in Santa Cruz. There are also city rebates to replace old toilets, washing machines and lawns.

Eileen Cross, a spokeswoman for the water department, said gardening enthusi-

asts have tried to do their part, picking up 2,200 rain barrels that the department distributed this year. Gardeners might have to get creative this summer, perhaps by installing drip systems or planting more drought-tolerant landscaping.

"Where it's going to be a challenge is outdoor use," Cross said.

Water department leaders plan to meet with more residents this month at apartment complexes, farmers markets and other locations. The water department has some customers outside the city in areas of Live Oak, Capitola and the North Coast.

Another public meeting on water conservation will be held 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday at Live Oak Grange at 1900 17th Ave. in Live Oak.

Water Poll

FROM PAGE 1

Valley is the nation's top farm-producing region, and an abundant water supply directly impacts jobs more than it does software, tourism or other economic engines in the Bay Area or Los Angeles.

"The Central Valley folks see the shortages much more directly this year," said Jay Lund, director of the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis.

"Agriculture is all around them. It's a very tight year, and there will be a lot of unemployment in some communities. But the Bay Area has pretty ample water supplies this year, and there is less agriculture."

Overall, 2013 had the least rainfall of any year since California became a state in 1850.

Dry year

Although some storms delivered rain in February and March, the state is still in a deep precipitation deficit, with the Sierra snowpack 26 percent of normal and many cities' rainfall totals at half

their historic average.

In the new poll, 88 percent of people surveyed said California has a serious water shortage, the highest since 1977, when the state was mired in its last severe drought.

Asked why, 37 percent of people said that it is because cities and farms haven't used existing supplies efficiently enough, 27 percent said the reason is that California doesn't have enough reservoirs and other storage, and 24 percent said both reasons were to blame, with 12 percent having no opinion.

"It's surprising how many people never pay attention," said Kathryn Edlin, of Walnut Creek, who participated in the poll. "It would be good if they spent more time on TV programs telling people suggestions on how to conserve."

Only 20 percent of Bay Area residents said the problem was not enough storage, while 37 percent of Central Valley residents said that.

Asked about environmental regulations, such as rules that limit pumping from the Delta to protect salmon, smelt and other fish, 49 percent statewide said those rules should be waived in dry

years, while 44 percent said they should not.

"I don't care about the fish. We don't need them. They aren't as important as people. People should come before the fish," said James Forsell, a stained glass window maker who lives in the hills above Palo Alto.

In the Central Valley, 62 percent said environmental rules should be waived, while only 36 percent of Bay Area residents and 49 percent of Los Angeles residents agreed.

Kathryn Phillips, state director of Sierra Club California, said that not only do commercial fishermen rely on salmon, but pumping too much fresh water from the Delta means the drinking water for millions of Bay Area residents is saltier, with diminished quality.

"This idea that it is just farmers or fish is oversimplified," she said.

Biggest water user

Farmers use 80 percent of the water that people in California consume.

Phillips said that she is heartened by a finding in the poll that by a 54-40 percent margin, Californians thought that farmers could

do more to use water more efficiently, including using more drip irrigation, lining canals with clay to stop water seepage and similar measures.

But Mike Wade, with the California Farm Water Coalition, said farmers already have made great strides, cutting water use 14 percent since 1967 while doubling the amount of crops harvested.

"I think the assumption that farmers can reduce water use by changing crops or using water more efficiently is incorrect," he said. "It probably comes from a lack of understanding."

One thing all regions of the state did agree on is that by a 67-27 percent margin, Californians support a voluntary 20 percent water use cutback, as Gov. Jerry Brown requested in January, rather than mandatory water rationing. The fact that Californians are concerned about the drought and are thinking about water issues this year should be noted by political leaders, said Lund, of UC Davis.

"It should be much easier to get legislators to pass bills on proposals about water this year," Lund said, "from a water bond to groundwater regulation."