

Summer water cutbacks on target

Neighboring district seeking greater curtailment from customers

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SANTA CRUZ — Water managers say Santa Cruz customers are complying with a 5 percent cutback this summer and the city's reservoir is in good shape.

The city is halfway through the six-month period during which it asked customers not to water landscaping or wash down surfaces from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., among other measures. It is the second consecutive year and the third since 2009 the city has imposed restrictions from May to October to offset below-average rainfall and maintain Loch Lomond Reservoir at 75 percent by the end of the

SEE WATER ON A2

WATER RESTRICTIONS

- No irrigation from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (8 p.m. for Soquel Creek) and water must not run off onto the sidewalk or street.
- Do not wash down paved surfaces.
- Water service in restaurants upon demand (Santa Cruz only).
- Hotel guests should be given the option to forgo daily linen service (Santa Cruz only).
- Swimming pools must not be drained or refilled (Santa Cruz only).
- Immediately fix all leaks.
- Nozzles required for hoses.

SOURCES: City of Santa Cruz, Soquel Creek Water District



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Young anglers fish for trout this spring at Loch Lomond Recreation Area. Despite a dry rain season, the reservoir is 89 percent full.

WATER

Continued from A1

dry season.

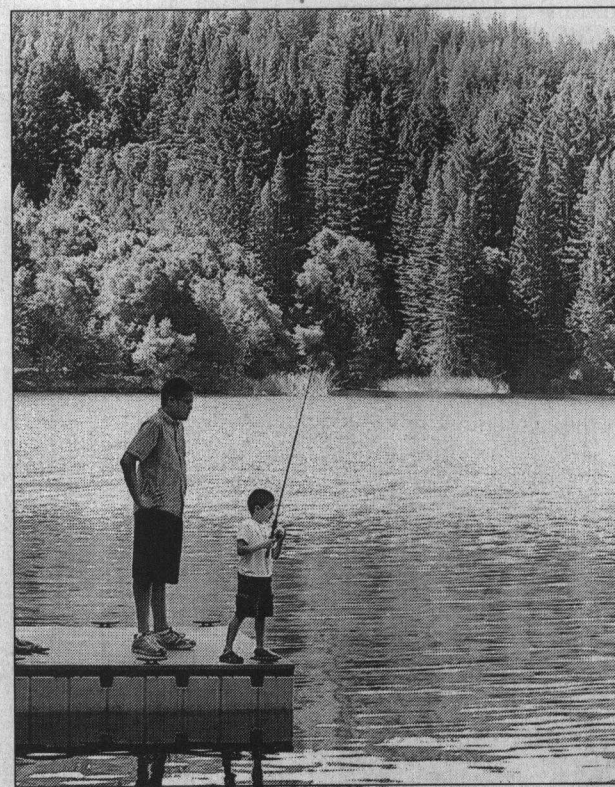
Rainfall was 69 percent of normal in 2012 and is 59 percent of normal so far this year. Yet, as of Wednesday, the lake stood at 89 percent full and water users were on target to meet or exceed the 5 percent cutback by keeping daily water production at 11 million gallons.

In contrast, neighboring Soquel Creek Water District has a 15 percent cutback and only saw half of that achieved in June. There were no savings recorded in May, and July's figures were not available Thursday.

Although the district sought a 5 percent cutback last year and saw a yield of just 2 to 3 percent, officials are not despairing, saying the back-to-back cuts are designed to encourage long-term conservation more than deal with immediate seasonal shortages, as in Santa Cruz.

"Our program is focused on education and communication," said Ron Duncan, the district's conservation director.

The district is on the lookout for overspraying, informing customers with door hangers and running a new program



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Loch Lomond visitors fish for trout from one of the docks this spring. The lake stands at 89 percent capacity.

that regularly alerts 4,000 customers to their use. The district provides two additional warnings before issuing a citation about the restrictions, though no fines have been levied so far this summer.

In Santa Cruz, officials have made 400 notifications and issued 16 penalties

for fixes that weren't made within two weeks. The city hired two seasonal monitors to patrol for violations of the restrictions, which in addition to daytime irrigation include serving water in restaurants only upon request and providing hotel guests the option of forgoing daily

linen service.

"The majority of customers we notify are unaware of their violation and are eager to correct it, once it's brought to their attention," Aerin Martin, environmental projects analyst for the Water Department, said in a statement. "Because many irrigation systems are programmed to operate during early morning hours, homeowners don't see them in operation and are unaware of leaks or misdirected spray."

The city and district, which serve a combined 135,000 customers, hope to build a joint seawater desalination plant to supplement threatened supply.

The plant would serve Santa Cruz during dry periods when low rain has diminished its surface water sources. The city also faces federally mandated reductions in river and stream diversions to bolster fish habitat.

The plant would provide a more constant supply for the ground-water based district, which needs to reduce pumping from its aquifers nearly 30 percent for 20 years to restore the basin and protect against saltwater intrusion at the coast.

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