

# SC Council Receives A Promising Water Report; Variances Possible

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The City of Santa Cruz won't eat you alive, not even once, if you have a demonstrably urgent need for more water than you have been allocated during the rationing period from now until the heavy rains come.

That was in effect told to the Santa Cruz City Council Tuesday night by Morris Allen, Santa Cruz water director, and John McGuire, the city's water engineer in charge of the allocation review program

And Allen had other good news, lots of it, as the calendar is nearing the time when stiff penalties will be assessed against persons who violate the emergency rationing ordinance.

Allen reported that the Loch Lomond reservoir is now about 37 per cent full, a pickup of some three per cent because of increased pumping from the San Lorenzo River and some rainfall.

The city has been able to get 400 acre feet from the river so far this pumping year (an acre foot is around 325,000 gallons), and it has gotten another 158 acre feet from natural inflow.

"So we are a little better off than we were," Allen said, and he attributed the city's ability to retain all the new water to the outstanding success of the rationing program to date.

"The ordinance is operating very well," he elaborated to the clearly delighted council. "We had anticipated having to produce 280 million gallons in March, but we had to produce only 180 million, about. This is a very major savings that shows the ordinance is working very well."

Allen said that in the past there had to be provisions for peak day demands of some 18 million gallons, but that he sees this going down to only 9 or 10 million gallons, or a reduction of about 40 per cent, because of the cooperation of all system users under the ordinance.

But, penalties for water overuse will begin May 1, based on use of water in the March through April two-month billing period.

The city, however, has set up a procedure through which persons who are considered qualified to be given more water will be provided an increased allocation.

You won't get an increase if your kids or friends

pop in on you for just a few days or weeks. But if your household size increases for 75 per cent of each two-month billing period, then an allocation boost will be made.

McGuire explained that all requests for variances from the ordinance are routed to him for first consideration.

"If they are approvable under terms of the ordinance, I approve," he said. "If I disapprove, then they go to a committee for review and the committee decides. A ruling by the committee is appealable to the water director if additional information is provided."

The council members asked numerous questions about ordinance details and passed on numerous complaints from their constituents and some of their own opinions on the whole subject of allocations.

But Vice Mayor Joe Ghio pointed out the rationing program is due for review in a couple of months and that it should be given a chance to work as approved until then.

Allen said the city is not yet taking any water from Loch Lomond or any of its wells, and he said that with consumption down by some 40 per cent the water situation is looking better than it has.

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