Water Talk

Sacramento Suburban Water District

Spring 2010

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California's Water – A System in Change

Water is essential to our daily lives, but few people stop to think about where our water comes from and how it gets to us.

Depending on where you live in California, your water may come from a nearby well, river or lake. Or it may travel hundreds of miles to reach your tap.

For the Sacramento area, snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada is a key source of our water supply. The Sierra snowpack acts as a natural reservoir, holding moisture in storage until it gradually melts in the spring and runs into streams that feed our rivers.

Sierra snowmelt provides more than a third of California's precious water supply for drinking and irrigation. It is the lifeblood of a water system that supplies 25 million Californians and millions of acres of productive farmland.

That system is critical because about 75% of the state's precipitation falls north of Sacramento, while as much as 80% of the demand for water is to the south. And since the state's Mediterranean-style climate means we receive little or no rain for months at a time, the ability to store and move water has

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New Water Conservation Requirements on Tap for California

The California Legislature enacted a comprehensive package of legislation on water in November 2009. The package included four policy bills that make important changes in state law and provide a framework for improving the reliability of the state's water supplies. It also included an $11.14 billion water bond measure for the November 2010 ballot that would fund water-related projects and programs around the state.

The package established new statewide water conservation mandates that require a 20% reduction in urban per-capita water use by 2020. To comply with the new law, retail water suppliers such as SSWD are required to determine their baseline per-capita water use and develop water use reduction targets using one of four specified methods.

Water agencies that do not comply with these water conservation requirements will not be eligible for state grants or loans. SSWD has received over $12.7 million in grant funding in recent years, allowing the District to complete needed capital projects while reducing the impact on local water rates.

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made it possible for California to grow and prosper.

But for all its importance, growing demands and challenges such as drought, endangered species protection and climate change are creating new challenges for the state's water system.

The mountain snowpack is particularly sensitive to climate variability. Warmer temperatures could reduce the snowpack by up to 40% over the coming decades, eliminating that source of "natural" water storage and potentially creating longer periods of drought and higher peak flood flows.

State water managers say the effects of climate change already are being seen, with some of the driest conditions in recent decades recorded in the 2006, '07 and '08 water years. Many local water agencies are preparing contingency plans to deal with these new uncertainties.

Preparing for a changing future is a top priority for SSWD under the Strategic Plan, which was last reviewed by the Board in March 2010. The plan calls for the District to incorporate sustainable concepts as it carries out its mission of delivering high-quality, reliable water to its customers. A Sustainability Policy adopted by the Board of Directors in 2007 also commits the District to think and act sustainably in day-to-day operations as well as long-term financial decisions.

Ensuring sufficient reliable water for the future will be a major theme for SSWD and other water agencies in the coming years. Keeping our customers informed and engaged is a key part of that effort.

Report Water Waste 24/7

Did you know that you can report water waste 24/7 online? On the home page at sswd.org, simply click on the "Report Water Waste" button and complete the short web form. That's it! SSWD water conservation staff will follow up on the information you provide.

Everyone needs to use water efficiently as every drop of water is precious. Now, you have an online tool at your fingertips to report water waste 24/7. Working together, we can save water in our community.

Conservation Requirements *continued from page 1*

While California has made great strides in water conservation and efficiency in recent years, the collective impacts of drought, climate change, increased population demands, regulatory restrictions on water deliveries and potential natural disasters make it clear that all water users will have to do much more in coming years. According to the State Department of Water Resources, using water more efficiently must become a permanent ethic – whether we are in a drought or not.

Businesses, schools and residential customers alike must take a look at how they use water today and determine ways to use it more efficiently. Outdoor landscape watering in particular is an area with great potential for water savings. Installing a weather-based irrigation controller and choosing water-wise plants are just some ways to achieve significant reductions in outdoor water use.

To read more about the state's new water conservation requirements, visit swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/hot_topics/20x2020/index.shtml.

Fast Fact:

Small changes can have a big impact on water efficiency. Prior to 1980, a showerhead used between 5.0 – 8.0 gallons per minute. A 10 minute shower uses approximately 65 gallons of water. With a low-flow showerhead, which uses 2.5 gallons per minute, the same 10 minute shower uses 25 gallons. That's 62% less water! Once installed, you don't have to think about using water efficiently – it happens by design! Pick up your low-flow showerhead at the District office at no charge today!

Did You Know...

If you live in a home that was built prior to 1980, and have not replaced the high-volume water using fixtures with newer, water-efficient ones, your indoor water use probably resembles this pie chart. Newer plumbing codes, and subsequent plumbing fixtures, are designed to use less water.

The two biggest users of water inside the home are toilets and washing machines. Replacing old appliances with water-smart models is a great way to reduce water use. **SSWD offers rebates** to help customers replace high water use appliances such as toilets and clothes washers. Go to "Customer Services" at sswd.org to apply for a toilet or clothes washer rebate or call the Customer Service Team at 972.7171 for more information.

Average Indoor Water Use
Non-conserving Home*

Source: Amy Vickers. *Water Use and Conservation*, 2001.
*Average indoor water use in a non-conserving, single-family home in North America and Canada.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

Give it a go and see if you can win a million – bragging rights that is. (Hey, we're a public entity… What were you expecting?) The answers can be found at the bottom of the page.

$64,000 Question

1. A leaking toilet can waste ____ gallons ***a day***.
   a. 0 (toilets never leak)
   b. 1-2
   c. 200 or more
   d. No one really knows

$125,000 Question

2. When washing clothes, you should
   a. Wash only small loads
   b. Match the water level to your load size
   c. Wash full loads when possible
   d. b and c

$250,000 Question

3. When washing dishes, you should
   a. Scrape rather than pre-rinse dishes
   b. Use wash and rinse basins (not running water)
   c. Run full loads in the dishwasher
   d. All of the above

$500,000 Question

4. The biggest culprit for water abuse inside the home is your
   a. Toilet
   b. Bathtub
   c. Washing machine
   d. Dishwasher

$1,000,000 Question

5. Salt water covers most of the earth's surface. How much fresh water is available for people to use?
   a. 10%
   b. 5%
   c. 3%
   d. 1%

Answers

1. *C (that's enough to wash about 150 loads of laundry in one month).*
2. *D (a washing machine uses about 40-50 gallons per load).*
3. *D*
4. *A (uses 1.5-7 gallons per flush; don't use the toilet as a trash can and check for leaks).*
5. *D (about 97% is salt water, 2% is frozen in glaciers and the remaining 1% is available to meet human needs; so make every drop count!)*

When Do I Water?

Odd/Even Outdoor Watering Schedule Returns

SSWD heard your concerns and are returning to the odd/even outdoor watering schedule, which also aligns with many of the regional water purveyors.

- Addresses ending in an odd number water: **Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.**
- Addresses ending in an even number water: **Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays.**
- No watering on Mondays.
- Watering is not recommended between Noon and 8:00 p.m.

In April 2010, in addition to reinstating the odd/even outdoor watering schedule, SSWD's Board of Directors declared a "Normal Water Supply" year, which means there is an adequate water supply to meet customers' needs.

The District's Water Conservation Regulation No. 15 lists the guidelines and restrictions for outdoor watering. For example, water that runs off lawns to adjoining properties or to a roadside ditch or gutter is prohibited. Violations are subject to enforcement procedures. Regulation No. 15 can be found in its entirety at sswd.org, under "About SSWD."

If you have questions regarding the odd/even outdoor watering schedule, please contact the Customer Service Team at 972.7171 during business hours.

Contact SSWD
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
916.972.7171
Fax 916.972.7639
sswd.org

SACRAMENTO SUBURBAN WATER DISTRICT
3701 Marconi Avenue
Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95821