



The Waterworks

A Publication of the Petaluma Department of Water Resources & Conservation

Conserve Water This Summer — It's the Right Thing To Do

Recently, there have been numerous newspaper articles about Sonoma County's water supply, which is complicated by weather, regulatory requirements, and endangered fish species in the Russian River water system.

The relatively dry weather Sonoma County has experienced for the last three years is a reminder that we live in a Mediterranean climate. This impacts how we use water. State regulatory requirements on the use of water from the Russian River water system were established in 1986 and frequently require the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) to release water from its reservoirs at a time when it should be storing the water. The Agency is working with the State to change this.

Additionally, three fish species in the Russian River water system are protected as

threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. In 2008, a federal agency determined the use of the Russian River water system was likely affecting these species. In response, the federal agency placed limits on the rate of water flow in the Russian River and Dry Creek during the summer months.

Because Petaluma uses water from the Russian River water system, we play an important role in the preservation of this vital resource. And Petaluma residents have responded to the call for water efficiency. During the last seven years, our water use has dropped 13 percent. The City of Petaluma encourages customers to continue building on this good work. In this newsletter you will find many ideas for saving water. Please conserve water this summer and always — it's the right thing to do!



Photo of secondary clarifier which began cleaning Petaluma's wastewater on January 6.

New Water Recycling Facility On Schedule for Full Operation

Treatment of wastewater at the City's new Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility began on January 6. That's when a large valve was opened, allowing wastewater to enter the plant for the first time since construction began in October 2005. The plant is being started up in phases, with the liquid process

going first. The tertiary treatment and solids handling processes will begin this spring, with the plant fully operational by summer. Recycled water produced by the facility will be reused at the plant and for irrigation purposes to help preserve our water resources.



Water Conservation Starts at Home

Did you know that, on average, up to 13 percent of residential water use comes from leaks? The biggest culprits are leaking toilets and broken irrigation systems; but there may be other leaks in your home that you don't even notice. We can help you find these hidden leaks and make your home more water efficient. Join the over 1,800 customers who have benefitted from the **FREE Water-Wise HouseCall Program** offered through the City of Petaluma.

During your Water-Wise HouseCall, a trained water efficiency professional will assess your current water usage, both indoors and out, and teach you how to save water by pointing out where savings can occur. Plus you'll get free water saving devices for your home! To see a video of a typical Water-Wise HouseCall or to sign up for an appointment online, visit our website at www.CityofPetaluma.net, (click on the Water Conservation Quick Link). Or call 800-548-1882 to schedule an appointment. Appointments are available Monday through Saturday.

Resident Says “Goodbye” to Lawn

Eileen B., a long time Petaluma resident, realized that her front lawn was really more a nuisance than anything else. She decided to do something about it. She knew she was wasting water every time the sprinklers came on. “My front lawn really had no purpose,” Eileen recalls. “I would see my old sprinkler system come on and would be embarrassed. I always struggled with how much I should water the lawn. So I ended

up just turning the system on in the spring and off in the winter.” Eileen decided to get rid of her front lawn using sheet mulching. Now her yard is planted with beautiful, low water-use plants and California natives. It is full of color and texture and is relatively maintenance free. It is estimated that Eileen will save 20,000-30,000 gallons of water per year by sheet mulching her lawn. Nice work Eileen!



Above: Turf was removed to make way for...

...a beautiful landscape of low water-use plants (right).



Parks Department Sets Plan to Reduce Water Use

Petaluma's Parks Department is also dedicated to conserving water. We have identified areas throughout the City's park system where water can be conserved. You may notice in the coming months that some of the turf areas in our parks are stressed or brown, or even mulched over. These turf areas have been designated as “non-essential” for recreation and are therefore receiving less water or no water at all. By doing this, we hope to realize a 30 percent reduction in water use.

SCWA to Raise Water Rates Ten Percent

Petaluma purchases most of its water from the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA). On July 1, the Agency will raise its water price ten percent. This follows last year's 11 percent increase. Forty percent of your water bill is the cost of water Petaluma purchases from SCWA. This limits Petaluma's ability to absorb rate increases from the Agency. If you have questions about SCWA's rate increase, please call SCWA at 547-1927.

Go with the Low Flow

Water Saving Tips

By using a low-flow showerhead, you can save up to 12 gallons of water per shower. And you still come out smelling like a rose! Ask your local hardware dealer about showerheads that flow only two gallons per minute.

High efficiency toilets (HETs) use at least 20% less water than the standard 1.6 gallon per flush toilet. You can earn a \$150* rebate by replacing a toilet that uses more than 1.6 gallons per flush with an HET.



*Before replacing your toilet, check with the City of Petaluma Water Resources & Conservation Department for details.

See Water Waste? Give Us a Call.

If you notice water waste, please call our Water Conservation Hotline at (707) 778-4507 or visit our website at www.CityofPetaluma.net and fill in the online form. We are here to help. When we receive a notice about water waste, usually the customer is not aware of the problem and appreciates being notified. We view this as an opportunity to educate our customers on the value of water conservation and the importance of conserving this limited natural resource. Thank you for your help.

For More Information

To learn more about what's happening at your Water Resources & Conservation Department call **778-4546** or visit: www.CityofPetaluma.net

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