THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT • PROUDLY SERVING EAST COUNTY AND THE SOUTH BAY SINCE 1956

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SPRING 2008

A NEWSLETTER FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT

Despite Recent Storms, Water Conservation Still Critical

A recent federal court decision restricts the north-to-south flow of water as a requirement to protect the endangered Delta smelt under the Endangered Species Act.

This winter, San Diego experienced periods of torrential rain. Despite the wet weather, conserving water is still as important now as ever.

Our region is heavily dependent on imported water. We live in a semi-arid region that provides about ten percent of the water needed to meet local demand; the other 90 percent must be imported from faraway Northern California and the Colorado River. While the recent storms and reports of a deep snow pack in the Sierra s are certainly welcome news, the threat of water shortages is far from over.

Eight years of drought on the Colorado River have left the major reservoirs serving Southern California less than half full. Even if wet conditions continued, it will take many years to replenish them and now we also face long-term challenges posed by environmental problems in the Sacramento-San Joaquin bay delta.

The future of the delta, which provides 40 percent of San Diego's water supply, is currently being decided in the courts over compliance with the Endangered Species Act. This issue will not be resolved quickly and will likely result in less water deliveries to Southern California this year and in future years. The impact to Southern California is our inability to fill reservoirs and instead the region will have to further draw down our diminishing regional storage. Because of the uncertainty, water conservation cannot be an isolated effort put forth only during times of drought. Conservation must become part of our Southern California lifestyle.

Since the last major drought in the early 1990s, Southern Californians have become leaders in water conservation. Because of our efforts, water demand today is essentially the same as it was eighteen years ago. Low flow toilets and showerheads, high efficiency clothes washers and other indoor conservation measures have saved enough water to allow our local economy to create jobs, homes, and new opportunities. For this to continue, however, extending water conservation practices outdoors is essential.

Depending on the season, 60 percent or more of all water is used to irrigate landscaping. Regrettably, much of this is wasted due to the over-watering of turf grass, poorly maintained irrigation systems, and poorly thought-out irrigation schedules, when simple, but effective, measures are available to conserve vast amounts of precious water.

Water conservation is the most cost effective and environmentally sound way to reduce demand. For tips on conserving water, check out our website at www.otaywater.gov or visit the Water Conservation Garden located on the campus of Cuyamaca College. By working together we can maximize our region's limited water supply to support continued economic prosperity.

Meter Reading Goes Wireless

Approximately one-third of water meters in the Otay Water District's service area are now automated (AMR). AMR meters are able to transmit their water use data via a one-way radio signal to a meter reader up to a half mile away. Now, rather than lifting the cover and visually inspecting each meter, every month, monthly water use data is transmitted electronically to a specially-equipped vehicle driving through the neighborhood.

AMR meters are able to transmit water use data using a secure, one-way radio signal.

By using an AMR system, a single meter reader will be able to record up to 5,000 readings during a typical eight-hour shift, as opposed to that same individual walking ten to fifteen miles per day and reading 700 meters or more.

Because of the cost savings and productivity enhancements being realized from this technology, a capital improvement program is underway to completely replace all of the district's 48,000 traditional meters.

The AMR meters also store up to 30 days of water use history and can send a signal notifying us of possible water leaks. This technology will lead to the development of new programs, such as real time water use monitoring, to help customers save water.

AMR is just one way the Otay Water District is utilizing technology to increase productivity, accuracy, reduce staff costs, promote water conservation, and enhance customer service.

New Artificial Turf Rebates

Single-family homeowners and commercial customers with established, currently irrigated natural grass are eligible to apply for a $1.00 per square foot rebate for the purchase and installation of artificial turf (up to 1,000 square feet). Sites must be pre-qualified before participating. The artificial turf grass may be self-installed or installed by a licensed contractor.

For more information or to be pre-qualified, please call (619) 670-2291. Also visit our website at www.otaywater.gov to download the rebate application.

Check Your Water Pressure

Have you experienced a leaking faucet or a constantly running toilet? A faulty water pressure regulator may be the cause. Even in new homes, pressure regulators do wear out and can fail.

The quality of your pressure regulator dictates the years of service to expect. Regulators may last as little as one year or twenty years or more. To ensure proper water pressure in your home, it is your responsibility to have and maintain a working pressure regulator. When doing any plumbing work around your house, ask your licensed plumber to check your water pressure.

Pressure regulators can wear out and should be checked whenever you are doing any plumbing work around your house.

Otay Water District Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm in the Board meeting room. The public is encouraged to attend at 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd., Spring Valley, CA.

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Irrigation Tune-up

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By Nan Sterman, Plant Soup Inc.

Ready for spring planting? Before your put your first plant into the ground, do an irrigation tune-up. It is easy to do and the rewards in terms of water and money savings are well worth it. Besides, your garden will do even better with the right amount of water!

Find your irrigation valves. Test them, one at a time. For each valve:

- Turn the water on. If an irrigation clock controls your valves, you can set the clock to run each one manually. Set the time for 10 minutes. Run it again if that isn't long enough to complete your tune-up.
- Walk through the region of your garden irrigated by sprinklers or the drip system controlled by that valve. **Watch out for:**
- Geysers from broken pipes or sprinklers.
- Sprinklers that water beyond the area they were intended for. Sidewalks and streets don't need water! Adjust sprinklers to put the water where it is needed, not where it is wasted.
- Sprinkler heads that water at an angle rather than parallel to the ground. They may have been bumped by a lawn mower, bicycle, or exuberant athlete. Dig down until you can straighten the heads. Make sure they are seated properly before reburying.
- Fine mist instead of spray. A fine mist tells you that the water pressure is too high. Install a pressure reducer into your lines.
- Seeps that tell you that there is a leak somewhere along the line. Follow the line or dig it up to find the leak and fix it.
- Plants that block the spray. Prune away foliage (but not too much), raise the riser, remove the plant, or change the entire zone to drip irrigation. After all, plants take water up through their roots, not through their leaves.
- Drip parts that have separated or blown off. Simply replace the missing or separated parts.
- With repairs complete, open the ends of drip lines and flush them. If you can find the head at the end of your sprinkler line, unscrew it and flush that line too. You'll be amazed at how much dirt finds its way into the lines. As you trouble shoot, you might also consider:
- Replacing old-fashioned sprinkler heads with rotating, multiple trajectory heads. These multi-stream spray heads deliver water more evenly and efficiently.
- Converting entire zones from spray to drip. Drip is easy to install, easy to maintain and most importantly, puts water exactly where it is needed – onto plant roots. If you do go to drip, don't mix spray heads onto the same zone.

Replace your irrigation clock with a new "smart" irrigation controller. These controllers "decide" when and how much to water based on rainfall, heat, and other factors. Though they cost more than standard clocks, Otay Water District offers a $350 rebate towards the purchase, please call 619-691-2291.

Classes at the Water Conservation Garden

Designing Landscapes With Native Plants. Saturday, May 10th 10am-12pm. Discover the variety of California native plants with Yvette Anderson of California's Own Native Landscape Design. $10 Members, $15 Non-Members.

Bye Bye Grass! Part 1. May 21st, 6-8pm. Tired of being a slave to your thirsty lawn? Join Nan Sterman, gardening expert and host of the PBS show, A Growing Passion, to learn how to exterminate your lawn for good. Part 1: $20 Members, $30 Non-Members.

Bye Bye Grass! Part 2. May 24th 10am-12pm. Your lawn is gone! Nan Sterman guides you to what do you do next. Part 2: $20 Members, $30 Non-Members; Parts 1 & 2, $30 Members, $50 Non-Members.

Pre-registration required. For more information, please visit www.thegarden.org.

A pesar de las lluvias recientes…¡Todavía es necesario ahorrar agua!

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Este invierno San Diego tuvo periodos de lluvia torrencial. Sin embargo, a pesar de lo húmedo del clima, ahorrar agua sigue siendo de suma importancia.

Nuestra región depende casi en su totalidad del agua importada. Vivimos en una región árida que provee diez por ciento del agua necesaria para llenar la demanda local. El otro noventa por ciento debe importarse del Norte de California y del Río Colorado. Las lluvias recientes y las profundas nevadas en la Sierra ciertamente son buenas noticias, más la amenaza de la falta de agua sigue latente.

Ocho años de sequía en el Río Colorado han dejado las represas de mayor importancia que dan servicio al Sur de California a menos de la mitad de su capacidad. Sin embargo, aunque continuaran las lluvias tomaría muchos años para llenarlas, y ahora enfrentamos retos a largo plazo que nos presentan los problemas ambientales en la delta de Sacramento y la bahía del Valle de San Joaquín.

La decisión reciente de tribunal federal restringe el flujo de agua de norte a sur como requisito para proteger el pez esperlano del delta o "delta smelt" conforme a la Ley de Especies en Peligro de Extinción.

El futuro del delta, que provee el cuarenta por ciento del suministro de agua de San Diego, se decide actualmente en los juzgados bajo el cumplimiento de la Ley de Especies en Peligro de Extinción. Este asunto no se resolverá rápido, y probablemente ocasione un menor suministro de agua al Sur de California durante este año y en años futuros. El impacto al Sur de California se debe a nuestra inhabilidad de llenar las represas y por consiguiente, la región tendrá que utilizar las reservas para sacar el agua que necesite. Debido a la incertidumbre, la conservación de agua no puede ser un esfuerzo aislado que se realiza solamente durante el tiempo de sequía. Actualmente el ahorro del agua debe formar parte de nuestro estilo de vida en el Sur de California.

A partir de la última gran sequía a principios de los 90, los Californianos del Sur se han convertido en líderes en el ahorro del agua. Gracias a nuestros esfuerzos, la demanda de agua en la actualidad es básicamente la misma que hace dieciocho años. Los inodoros de baja descarga, las regaderas de alto rendimiento, las lavadoras de alta eficiencia y otras medidas de ahorro dentro del hogar, han ahorrado suficiente agua permitiendo a nuestra economía local la creación de trabajos, casas y nuevas oportunidades. Sin embargo, para que esto pueda continuar, es fundamental llevar las prácticas del ahorro del agua al exterior de la casa.

Dependiendo de la estación, el 60 por ciento o más de toda el agua se utiliza para regar el jardín. Desafortunadamente, mucha de esta agua se desperdicia debido al sobre riego del pasto, falta de mantenimiento de los sistemas de irrigación, y a horarios de riego mal planeados, cuando contamos con medidas simples y eficaces para ahorrar grandes cantidades de este preciado recurso.

El ahorro del agua es el método más seguro para el ambiente y el más económico para reducir la demanda de agua. Para obtener más información sobre el ahorro de agua, visite nuestra página de Internet en www.otaywater.gov o visite el jardín Water Conservation Garden ubicado dentro del campus de Cuyamaca College. Trabajando unidos, podemos lograr que rinda el suministro limitado de agua de la región para continuar haciendo que crezca la economía.

La Lectura de los medidores ya es in-alambrica

Aproximadamente una tercera parte de los medidores de agua en el área de servicio del Otay Water District ya es automatizada (AMR). Los medidores AMR pueden transmitir datos de su uso de agua a través de una señal de radio a un lector de medidores hasta a media milla de distancia. Ahora en lugar de levantar la tapadera y cada mes inspeccionar visualmente cada medidor, los datos de uso de agua se transmiten electrónicamente a un vehículo especialmente equipado que recorre el vecindario.

Al utilizar el sistema AMR, un solo lector de medidores podrá tomar hasta 5,000 lecturas durante un turno normal de ocho horas, a diferencia del mismo lector que caminaba de diez a quince millas diarias y solo leía 700 medidores o más.

Debido al ahorro de costos y a la alta productividad realizada gracias a esta tecnología, está por llegar un programa de capital para mejora y reemplazar por completo los 48,000 medidores tradicionales.

Los medidores AMR tienen capacidad para guardar un historial de 30 días de uso de agua, y pueden enviar una señal notificándonos de posibles fugas. Esta nueva tecnología nos llevará al desarrollo de programas nuevos, como monitoreo del tiempo que se usa el agua lo cual ayudará al usurario a ahorrar agua.

AMR es solo un modo en que el Otay Water District utiliza la tecnología para incrementar productividad, exactitud, reducir costos de personal, promover la conservación del agua e intensificar el servicio al consumidor.

Los medidores AMR pueden transmitir datos sobre el uso de agua utilizando un radio de una sola frecuencia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT CALL 619.670.2222 OR GO TO WWW.OTAYWATER.GOV

The Pipeline Newsletter is published quarterly by the Otay Water District and can also be found online at www.otaywater.gov. If you have questions about the newsletter, please contact us at 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd. Spring Valley, CA 91978-2096.