



MEDIA RELEASE

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES LAWN WATERING BAN

Move increases conservation to 40 percent, enough to avoid peak water shortage next summer

SANTA BARBARA, CA – December 6, 2016

The Santa Barbara City Council adopted a regulation today banning lawn watering with limited exceptions as we go into the sixth year of drought. This regulation will take effect January 1, 2017 and is intended to increase conservation given projected water shortages that are to occur during peak demand months in summer 2017.

“Our community has done a lot to reduce water use in Santa Barbara,” said City Water Resources Manager, Joshua Haggmark. “But as the drought continues our water supply situation is getting worse. Due to our community’s achievements in water conservation we have managed to avoid lawn watering restrictions until now, but we need to take action to stretch our remaining water supplies.”

Reducing lawn watering is the single biggest step the community can take now to make a significant impact on reducing water use and preventing severe peak water shortages a few months from now. During summer months, there is a higher water demand due to irrigation and the City anticipates that with current limited water supplies, it will be unable to meet water demands during these highest water use periods. In the last year, customers have reduced water use by 35 percent and with the lawn watering ban, customers can extend that achievement to 40 percent, which will be enough to overcome projected peak water shortages.

“Winter rains could certainly help our situation,” Haggmark said. “But we need to take preventative measures now, in case that rain doesn’t come.”

Beginning the lawn watering ban in January allows the City to begin saving additional water now, while also educating customers about the regulation and providing information about landscape care before the heat of spring and summer. Once the current drought has passed, the City will reevaluate its water supply portfolio to address future water supply needs and watering restrictions.

Traditionally, the City’s supply has come from Lake Cachuma, which now stands at 7.5 percent of capacity, and from the Gibraltar Reservoir, which is empty. Other water sources include supplies from groundwater, recycled water, State Water Project imported water, and soon a reactivated supply from the desalination plant, which could produce 30 percent of the City’s needs. All of these sources work together to meet the City’s demands.

The lawn watering ban is expected to save between 500 and 1,200 acre-feet of water by next summer. That's enough to support as many as 3,600 families for a year. Total water demand in the City is about 10,000 acre-feet per year (AFY), down from about 14,000 AFY before the drought.

The City Council's action is specific to turfgrass watering, also referred to as lawn watering, which has limited exceptions. Exceptions include recycled water sites, open spaces and parks on publicly owned and operated lands, areas of active recreation at schools and state-licensed child care facilities, and golf course putting greens and tee boxes. Certified water wise turfgrasses and lawn areas directly related to business activities, such as ceremonial event spaces, will need to submit an exemption application and are subject to compliance with water conservation targets.

The focus on lawns allows for critical water savings, and prioritizes outdoor water use to preserve high value landscaping such as trees and shrubs. The City has informational resources available to help the community save trees. For specific tree watering information, signs of drought stress in trees, watering FAQs, and more can be found at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/TreeWatering.

For more information on water supplies, drought planning, regulations, and rebates please visit www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Water or call (805) 564-5460. Thank you for taking action, we are all in this together.

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