

Pride in Public Service

On February 3rd two new police officers were sworn in during the council meeting. A hearty welcome to Ryan Howard and William Van Vleck!

General Water Conditions

Several consecutive dry years, combined with the driest year on record, have culminated into drought conditions for Healdsburg and throughout the state. When comparing rainfall totals in years dating back to 1894, 2013 has the lowest total rainfall than any other year on record. In fact, it was the lowest rainfall in over 100 years. The National Weather Service anticipates precipitation levels will continue to be below average.

Healdsburg Water Conditions

On January 28, 2014 the California Department of Public Health made an announcement identifying Healdsburg as one of 17 communities facing severe water shortages. While city officials concur with the Governor's drought emergency efforts, the information contained in the CDPH announcement is not an accurate depiction of Healdsburg's water conditions. In addition to stating the city's water system is at risk, the announcement implies Healdsburg's water supply may be limited to 60 to 100 days. The City of Healdsburg will not run out of water in the next 60-100 days nor in the foreseeable future. During the winter months Healdsburg's primary water source is the Russian River. Although low storage levels at Lake Mendocino have impacted wells reliant on the river, Healdsburg's wells are recharging at an appropriate level to enable the city to meet demand.

The City has been working closely with CDPH regarding our water supply and we believe that we will be removed from the list of cities facing severe water shortages. There is an adequate water supply to serve forecasted water needs. While this is good news for Healdsburg, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of complying with the mandatory conservation measures instituted by the City Council on January 21.

Healdsburg has a secondary water source that further strengthens the city's water supply. April 1st through November 1st the city has water rights that allow access from wells in the Dry Creek Valley. These wells are very reliable. Lake Sonoma is the water source for these wells and there is a multi-year supply of water there. The city has been working with the State Water Resource Control Board to gain winter access to the Dry Creek wells. Discussions are ongoing and the city hopes for timely resolution. Year-round Dry Creek water rights will reduce Healdsburg's reliance on the Russian River for water supply, leaving more water for the river ecosystem and neighboring communities.

Stage 1 voluntary water conservation measures have been in effect in Healdsburg since June 2013. On January 21, 2014 the City Council implemented Stage 2 mandatory water conservation measures. This action was taken as a proactive measure intended to protect local water resources for us and our neighbors. City officials recognize the need to act within a regional context and to employ conservation measures to mitigate water shortfalls.

Healdsburg's Stage 2 Water Conservation Mandate

The Stage 2 conservation mandates reflect bans on non-essential water uses. They are common-sense measures that are easy to put in place. Many of these measures are easy to incorporate into your normal routine; the Stage 2 mandate helps focus people on the need for conservation and how small changes in behavior can conserve significant amounts of water. Specifically, the Stage 2 Water Conservation Plan calls for:

1. Repair leaks to all water systems;
2. Apply outdoor irrigation in the early morning or evening to minimize evaporation; no irrigation on Mondays;
 - a. Even addresses irrigate Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays;
 - b. Odd addresses irrigate Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays;
 - c. Adjust to avoid overspray and run off and to meet weather conditions;
3. Prohibit vehicle washing except at a vehicle washing facility that treats and recycles water;
4. Refrain from filling swimming pools, except as necessary to prevent damage to pool equipment;
5. Prohibit use of water, unless recycled, for dust control and compaction at construction sites;
6. Achieve a 20% reduction in water use.

Beyond the requirements listed in the municipal code, residents can save water by repairing leaking toilets, taking shorter showers, capturing water that is typically wasted while waiting for hot water, running only full loads in dishwashers, using a broom rather than a hose to wash patios and decks.

The website and water conservation page have been updated with many links to low cost water conservation measures: www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us.

Other links include:

Car wash tips: <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/car-wash-tips/>

How to:

Read your water meter <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/water-meter/>

Identify toilet leaks <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/toilet/>

Know your irrigation: <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/irrigation-tips/>

Tour home conservation tips: <http://www.h2ouse.org/tour/index.cfm>

Future Water Conservation Programs

New water conservation programs are currently being developed. In addition to providing informational handouts to business operators (we DO want our visitors to conserve!), the city will be offering educational workshops. Specific information will be available as we roll out the programs.

No Water Discounts!

It is important to clarify a misstatement that appeared in a recent letter to the editor: The does NOT give utility discounts to businesses and wineries; particularly not at the expense of residents. State legislation mandates rate structures that are equitable and represent the cost of providing service to each customer.

Please Conserve

Please help conserve water here in Healdsburg. Be assured that if further steps are needed we will move quickly to insure that water is available for the health and safety of all.