

# Water Conservation FAQs (frequently asked questions)

1. Why is the District going back to a two (2) day a week water schedule?

**Answer:** As the District's Water Treatment Plant #1 is being shut down for the Water Treatment Plant Expansion Project, the District's water production will not be able to meet all the water demands of its customers. Therefore, beginning September 1 there will only be two (2) allowable days for irrigation between the times of 12am-10am.

2. Why is the Water Plant being shut down now and not in winter?

**Answer:** The Water Treatment Plant Expansion project requires a long time frame in which to complete the necessary work, commissioning and acceptance of the new plant. The scheduled shut down was determined to occur in September based on average historical water use in the District coupled with water conservation that would allow us to shut off Plant #1.

3. Will new watering schedule requirement kill my lawn?

**Answer:** Although your lawn may brown significantly, depending on the weather, it should only go dormant and the roots should remain alive. If you have been around the Sacramento area outside of Rancho Murieta you can see how a two day a week irrigation schedule has affected lawn irrigation. Most of the region has been in a two day/week allowable irrigation schedule as well since earlier this year. There are resources available on the internet that discuss this, such as <http://www.wikihow.com/Save-Water-with-a-Sleeping-Lawn>

4. Will previous water violation tags count towards this continued conservation plan?

**Answer:** No, conservation tagging will be reset. All customers must comply and may be tagged daily for continued water waste violations.

5. Can the RMA HOA fine me for my lawn turning brown?

**Answer:** No. Per an Executive Order from the Governor, no HOA may fine as a result of water conservation due to the statewide drought.

6. Can I hand water?

**Answer:** Yes, as long as from a source or hose that causes water to shut off immediately when not in use and is in compliance with all other code and regulations. Manually running a sprinkler is not hand watering. Drip irrigation ok too.

7. What is the State's Emergency Drought Regulations?

**Answer:** Two executive orders were issued by the Governor and the Office of Administrative Law adopted Emergency regulations to promote water conservation. Fact sheet available here:

[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/emergency\\_regulations\\_waterconservation.shtml](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/emergency_regulations_waterconservation.shtml)

**Section 864. Prohibited Activities in Promotion of Water Conservation.**

**(a) To promote water conservation, each of the following actions is prohibited, except where necessary to address an immediate health and safety need or to comply with a term or condition in a permit issued by a state or federal agency:**

**(1) The application of potable water to outdoor landscapes in a manner that causes runoff such that water flows onto adjacent property, non-irrigated areas, private and public walkways, roadways, parking lots, or structures;**

**(2) The use of a hose that dispenses potable water to wash a motor vehicle, except where the hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle or device attached to it that causes it to cease dispensing water immediately when not in use;**

**(3) The application of potable water to driveways and sidewalks; and**

**(4) The use of potable water in a fountain or other decorative water feature, except where the water is part of a recirculating system.**

**(b) The taking of any action prohibited in subdivision (a) of this section, in addition to any other applicable civil or criminal penalties, is an infraction, punishable by a fine of up to five hundred dollars (\$500) for each day in which the violation occurs.**

8. Can I wash my car?

**Answer:** Yes, as long as runoff is not created and hose used is fixed with a shut off valve that immediately stops dispensing water when not in use. See #7 above.

9. Do you promote water conservation with rebates?

**Answer:** Yes. We have offered varying rebates available at [rmcsd.com](http://rmcsd.com)

Rebates currently available (while funding lasts; info. & rebate applications available on District website)

- High efficiency Toilets \$100
- High efficiency Clothes Washer \$125
- Weather based controller \$100

10. Why is the golf course (RMCC) not following the irrigation schedule?

**Answer:** We supply the Rancho Murieta Country Club recycled water for their irrigation needs. Recycled water is produced from the tertiary wastewater treatment process, filtered and disinfected, before irrigation use, not produced from the Water Treatment Plant.

11. Why is the Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) not following the irrigation schedule?

**Answer:** In the areas along Laguna Joaquin, the North Gater and the North parkway, they use raw water for their irrigation needs. Raw water is water that has not been treated through the Water Treatment Plant. In areas where they use potable water, they must adhere to the irrigation schedule.

12. Why don't you offer a rebate to buy back lawn as is done in other areas?

**Answer:** We have not budgeted to be able to provide a buyback of lawn. However, we recommend that lawns be removed and areas be converted to xeriscape, rockscape, or California native landscaping. As they require less time, water and maintenance, money will be saved.

13. Is there a specific law governing the landscape water in California?

**Answer:** Yes. Assembly Bill 1881 (2006) required all local agencies to adopt a water efficient landscape ordinance by January 1, 2010. DWR's [Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance](#) reflects the State policy of promoting the conservation and efficient use of water in landscapes.

What are the objectives of DWR's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance?

**Answer:** The objectives, consistent with AB 1881 are:

- To promote the values and benefits of landscapes while recognizing the need to invest water and other resources as efficiently as possible.
- To establish a structure for planning, designing, installing maintaining and managing water efficient landscapes in new and rehabilitated projects.
- To establish provisions for water management practices and water waste prevention for established landscapes.
- Use water efficiently without waste by setting a Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA) as an upper limit for water use and reduce water use to the lowest practical amount.

14. What rules does the District have set up for water conservation?

**Answer:** District Code Sections, as shown below.

## **SECTION 10.00 Water Use Efficiency** *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

### **10.01 Definitions**

As used in Section 10.00, the following terms shall have the specified meanings.

- a. Dwelling Unit  
Dwelling unit shall mean any structure intended for human habitation or use, either transient or permanent.
- b. Pressure Reducing Valve  
Pressure reducing valve shall mean a valve device, which regulates water pressure to structures and is designated to permit the pressure for use within that structure.
- c. Public Use  
Public use shall mean all commercial or industrial establishments, including restaurants, bars, public buildings, comfort stations, schools, gymnasiums, or other places to which the public has access or which are frequented by the public with or without special permission or invitation, and installation where both free and pay fixtures are installed so that the fixtures' use is similarly unrestricted.
- d. Self-Closing Valve  
Self-closing valve shall mean a valve device designed to close by spring or by water pressure when left unattended.
- e. Water Efficient Aerator  
Water efficient aerator shall be USEPA WaterSense labeled product and mean an aerator equipped to limit water flow to a maximum of 1.5 gallons per minute (gpm) or less for residential buildings. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*
- f. Water Efficient Showerhead  
Water efficient showerhead shall be USEPA WaterSense labeled product and mean a water efficient showerhead (with one showerhead per shower stall) equipped to limit water flow to a maximum of 2.0 gpm or less for residential buildings. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*
- g. High Efficiency or Ultra Low Flow Toilet  
High efficiency toilet shall be USEPA WaterSense labeled product and mean a tank type toilet or water closet designed to function with a maximum rated flush volume of 1.28 gallons per flush or less. An ultra low flow toilet is rated at 1.6 gallons per flush per the California State Building Codes. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*
- h. Weather Based Irrigation Controller  
An irrigation controller that has automated watering schedules using climate or soil moisture sensing capability in accordance with requirements of the California Building Standards CalGreen Code. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

### **10.02 Water Waste**

No person shall cause or permit any water furnished to the person's premises by the District to run to waste as defined in Section 11.01. The District may, pursuant to the requirements of Section 13.00, disconnect the District's service to any premises and/or customer for the customer's failure to comply with this Section. The District may inspect or install test meters in un-metered service to determine compliance.

**10.03 Conservation Devices Required on New or Remodeled Dwelling Units**

All new dwelling units that require a Sacramento County Building permit that are connected to the District distribution system, after the effective date of this Chapter, shall be constructed pursuant to the California State Building Codes otherwise known as the "CalGreen Code" and be USEPA WaterSense labeled homes. For any remodeled units that require a Sacramento County Building permit that are connected to the District distribution system, after the effective date of this Chapter, shall be constructed pursuant to the California State Building Codes otherwise known as the "CalGreen Code" and any replaced or remodeled fixtures shall be District-approved water efficient equipment, plumbing fixtures and appliances and be USEPA WaterSense labeled products. Pressure reducing valves shall be installed on new dwelling units where District approved improvement plans call for such installation in accordance with District Standards. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**10.04 Conservation Devices Required on New or Remodel Public Users**

All new public users or users remodeling facilities that require a Sacramento County building permit and are connected to the District distribution system after the effective date of this Chapter, shall be equipped with District-approved water efficient equipment, plumbing fixtures and appliances pursuant to the California State Building Codes otherwise known as the "CalGreen Code" and be USEPA WaterSense labeled products. Pressure reducing valves shall be installed on new public use facilities where District approved improvement plans call for such installation in accordance with District Standards. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**10.05 Water Efficient Landscape Requirements**

Landscape design, installation, maintenance, and management can and should be water efficient. All new or modifications to existing landscape areas subject to Homeowner Association review or County permit approvals are required to comply with the California Water Conservation Landscaping Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 1881, Laird) and Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance effective January 1, 2010 or, when adopted, the least as effective as Sacramento County Water Efficient Landscape Requirements (Chapter 14.10). The District allows the use of all types of water efficient plant materials, including artificial turf. Allowable water efficient plant materials are identified on the District approved plant list. The District prohibits any plants considered invasive to the local waterways, such as invasive plants listed by the California Invasive Plant Council. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**10.06 Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Devices**

All new or replacement air conditioning and refrigeration systems using water from the District distribution system or discharging to the District sewer system, installed after the effective date of this Chapter, shall be equipped with water conservation devices of sufficient capacity to limit makeup water to a maximum 0.2 GPM per ton of rated capacity under full loading at a maximum summer temperature of 105 degrees Fahrenheit. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**10.07****Evaporative Coolers**

Evaporative coolers installed after the effective date of this Chapter shall be equipped with a re-circulating pump. The makeup supply line shall be equipped with an inlet valve, which shall open according to manufacturer specifications. Makeup water shall be used intermittently, and not continuously, as required due to discharge that shall occur only on an as needed basis to remove high total dissolved solids (TDS) levels on the order of more than 2,000 parts per million (ppm). *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**10.08****Swimming and Wading Pools**

All swimming or wading pools installed after the effective date of this Chapter, which have a capacity of over two thousand gallons of water, and which use water from the District distribution system or which discharge water into the District sewer system, shall be equipped with re-circulating systems and approved filters. Pool covers are recommended but not required.

**SECTION 11.00 Water Waste****11.01****Wasteful Use of Water**

Any of the following acts or omissions, whether intentional, unintentional, willful or negligent, shall constitute the wasteful use of water *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*:

- a. Water flowing away from a property caused by excessive application(s) of water beyond reasonable or practical irrigation rates, duration of application, or other than incidental applications to impervious surfaces.
- b. Causing or permitting an amount of water to discharge, flow, run to waste into or flood any gutter, sanitary sewer, water course or storm drain, or to any adjacent lot, from any tap, hose, faucet, pipe, sprinkler, or nozzle. In the case of irrigation, "discharge," "flow" or "run to waste" means that water is applied to the point that the earth intended to be irrigated has been saturated with water so that additional applied water then flows over the earth. In the case of washing, "discharge," "flow" or "run to waste" means that water in excess of that necessary is applied to wash, wet or clean the dirty or dusty object, such as an automobile, sidewalk, or parking area.
- c. Allowing water fixtures or heating or cooling devices to leak or discharge water.
- d. Maintaining ponds, waterways, decorative basins or swimming pools without water recirculation devices or with known leaks, both seen and unseen.
- e. Discharging water from, and refilling, swimming pools, decorative basins or ponds in excess of the frequency reasonably necessary to maintain the health, maintenance or structural considerations of the pool, basin or pond, as determined by the General Manager.
- f. Overfilling of any pond, pool or fountain which results in water discharging from the pond, pool or fountain.

- g. Continued operation of an irrigation system that applies water to an impervious surface or that is in disrepair.
- h. Use of a water hose not equipped with a control nozzle capable of completely shutting off the flow of water except when positive pressure is applied.
- i. Irrigation of lawns or landscaping when it is raining.
- j. Irrigating lawns or landscaping between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., with the exception of drip irrigation or hand watering, as otherwise authorized pursuant to this Section, unless a variance is granted by the General Manager. Exceptions are accepted for District approved weather based irrigation controllers.
- k. Using potable water from the District's water system for compaction, dust control or other construction purposes without first obtaining approval from the General Manager as provided in Section 7.07 and a meter from the District.
- l. Installing a single-pass cooling system, such as water cooled air compressor, in any property that is newly connected to the District water system. This does not apply to evaporative cooling systems.
- m. Installing a non-recirculating system in any new automatic car wash or new commercial laundry system or failure to utilize current best management practices for water conservation that are industry standards.

**11.02 Determination of Wasteful Uses of Water**

It shall be unlawful for any person to waste water as defined above in Section 11.01. Violations will be based on observation(s) and documentation of waste by District staff, including but not limited to evidence of a continually running water meter readings and/or physical inspection, and/or visual observation of the occurrence. Violations are subject to the enforcement and penalty provisions in Section 13.00. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**11.03 Repair of Leaky Indoor or Outdoor Fixtures**

It shall be unlawful for any person to maintain or allow on the person's premises leaky or faulty water fixtures or devices to which District water is supplied, so that District water is wasted thereby. Failure to repair or disconnect such leaky or faulty devices within seven (7) days after being notified in writing to do so by the District, shall be sufficient cause for the District to disconnect its water service for such premises, pursuant to the requirements of Section 13.00, until the repairs have been made. At the discretion of the District, the customer may be informed in writing that the leak must be repaired more quickly, in which case the customer shall repair the leak in the time specified by the General Manager. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**SECTION 12.00 Drought Response**

**Determination of Drought**

In determining the District's water system's Drought Stage, the General Manager shall determine whether that system's water supplies available for potable use are sufficient to meet the current customer demands on that system and shall consider, unless otherwise excluded by this section, all

relevant factors. The General Manager shall consider, among other things (*Amended by Ordinance 2011-04*):

- a. any variations in the reliability of the Lake Water or other supplemental supplies available to the District’s water system, which may be indicated by Department of Water Resources monitoring data in the Cosumnes River watershed (such as snow survey, rainfall precipitation, previous year runoff pattern data);
- b. gauge monitoring that indicates below normal Cosumnes River flow conditions that may affect the District’s ability to pump water to the Lakes System;
- c. availability of non-potable water to meet non-potable demands on the District’s water system; and
- d. the success, or lack thereof, of previous declarations of a less stringent Drought Stage in causing the water-use reductions sought by the District.
- e. the General Manager will select the necessary stage for response to the drought based on the provisions outlined in the District Board adopted Water Shortage Contingency Plan.
- f. The Board of Directors shall make the final drought declaration upon review of the General Manager’s drought determination.

**SECTION 13.00 Enforcement, Disconnection and Restoration of Service**

**13.01 Enforcement**

The General Manager shall enforce the provisions of this Chapter and, for such purposes, shall have the powers of a peace officer, if deputized or if authorized by law. Such power shall not be regarded as limitations on or otherwise affecting the powers and duties of the County Health Officer. (*Amended by Ordinance 2011-04*)

**13.02 Violation of Chapter**

In the event of a violation of any laws, ordinances, rules or regulations of the State of California, the County of Sacramento, or the District, respecting the subject matter contained herein, the District shall notify in writing the person or persons causing, allowing, or committing such violation and the General Manager shall have the authority to issue penalties and/or disconnect the property served from the District distribution system, in the manner set forth herein. (*Amended by Ordinance 2011-04*)

**13.03 Penalties**

The goal of the provisions of this chapter are to achieve voluntary compliance from the customer, and the District will take reasonable measures to assure the customer has information available to promptly and efficiently address water use issues. Where voluntary compliance cannot be achieved through initial contacts and warnings, then appropriate administrative penalties and further action are required. Except as otherwise provided herein, violations of any provision of this chapter shall be addressed as follows (*Amended by Ordinance 2011-04*):

<b>Violation</b>	<b>Penalty</b>
First	Personal or written notification of the violation

Second	Written notification and issuance of a notice to correct
Third	Issuance of an administrative penalty of \$100
Fourth	Issuance of a penalty of \$200
Fifth	Issuance of a penalty of \$500
Final	Disconnected water service and/or other penalties as provided in the notice of violation and as determined by the General Manager.

**13.04 Penalties in Times of Water Shortage**

In addition to any other penalties provided by this chapter, if a customer of the District water system violates any of the water use restrictions during a stage two, three, or four water shortage stage as set forth in Water Shortage Contingency Plan, and such conditions are not corrected within five (5) days after the customer is given written notice, the District is authorized to bill the customer, as a penalty, at twice the metered rate during the time that the violation continues and the penalties specified in Section 13.03 above may be increased by up to 100%. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**13.05 Appeal**

There shall be no appeal of the water use restrictions identified in this Chapter or the Water Shortage Contingency Plan. Any appeal of other matters or decisions of District staff shall be appealable in writing to the General Manager within ten (10) days and if still unresolved a second appeal may be sent in writing to the District Board of Directors within ten (10) days of the General Manager’s decision. *(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04)*

**13.06 Variances**

In unusual circumstances, application of this chapter may cause unnecessary hardships or results inconsistent with this chapter's purposes and intent. Therefore, variances to some of the requirements of this chapter may be appropriate as described below*(Amended by Ordinance 2011-04):*

- a. Authority to Grant Variances.  
The General Manager may grant variances to water use restrictions provisions during a stage one, two, or three Drought Stage as specified in the Water Shortage Contingency Plan. During stage four drought, as specified in the Water Shortage Contingency Plan, any previously granted variances shall be suspended without notice, unless they are based on a critical health need as determined by a licensed medical professional, with such determination being provided to the General Manager.
- b. Other Variances.  
Customers who seek a variance from this chapter for any reason shall submit to the District a written request for variance, setting forth, in detail, the extraordinary circumstances that support the application. The General Manager may approve the application in his or her discretion; provided, that the variance allows the applicant to use only the minimum amount of water in addition to that allowed by this chapter that the General Manager reasonably believes is



necessary to satisfy the circumstances that support the application. Any such variance shall terminate one (1) year after its issuance, subject to an application for its renewal.

**13.07 Disconnection**

As an alternative method of enforcing the provisions of this or any other Chapter, rule or regulation of the District, the General Manager shall have the authority to disconnect the customer from the District's distribution system, without liability to the District, in the following manner:

- a. At least ten (10) days before the proposed disconnection of any service, a customer shall be provided with written notice of the procedure for the availability of an opportunity to discuss the reasons for the proposed disconnection of service.
  
- b. After notice has been given as specified in subparagraph (a) and prior to disconnection of service, a customer shall have the opportunity to discuss the reason for the disconnection with an employee designated by the District who shall be empowered to review disputed bills, rectify errors and settle controversies pertaining to disconnection of service.
  
- c. No service shall be disconnected by reason of delinquency in payment of bills on any Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or any time during which the District's office is not open to the public.

**13.08 Settling Disputes**

The General Manager is hereby authorized to review disputes pertaining to any matters for which service may be disconnected and to adjust errors and settle disputes.

**13.09 Public Nuisance and Abatement**

During the period of disconnection, the habitation of such disconnected premises by human beings shall constitute a public nuisance, which shall authorize the District to bring proceedings for the abatement of the occupancy of the premises during the period of the disconnection. In such event, and as a condition of restoring service, the District shall be paid reasonable attorney's fees and costs arising from such action, plus any other necessary charges for or incurred in the restoration of service.

**13.10 Restoration of Service**

When service under this Chapter has been disconnected for any reason, the service shall not be restored until all unpaid sums are paid in full, plus all District expenses for disconnecting and restoring the service, plus a seventy-five dollar (\$75.00) restoration fee. *(Amended by Ordinance 85-1)*

**13.11 Recovery of Costs**

In the event that the District is required to bring legal action to enforce any provision of this Chapter, including but not limited to the collection of delinquent fees and charges, the District shall be entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees, interest and other costs of suit.

**13.12 Means of Enforcement Only**

The District hereby declares that the foregoing procedures are established as a means of enforcement of the terms and conditions of its ordinances, rules, and regulations and not as a penalty.

**13.13 Cumulative Remedies**

All remedies set forth herein for the collection and enforcement of rates, charges, and penalties are cumulative and may be pursued alternatively, concurrently or consecutively.

**13.14 Misdemeanor**

A violation of any provision of this Chapter is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or by imprisonment in the County Jail not to exceed six (6) months, or both. Each and every day, or part of day that a violation of the Chapter continues, shall be deemed a separate offense hereunder and shall be punishable as such.

**13.15 Fire and Other Emergencies**

Nothing in this chapter limits, or may be construed as limiting the availability of water for extinguishing fires, meeting the demands of any other similar emergency, or routine inspection and maintenance of fire hydrants. (*Amended by Ordinance 2011-04*)

**SECTION 14.00 Severability**

The Board hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and thereby adopted this Chapter or any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared to be unconstitutional.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of the Ordinance of the application thereof to any person or circumstances is for any reason held unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Chapter or the application of such provisions to other persons or circumstances.