



Sunnyslope Water District

Spring/Summer 2021

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# Water lines

News you can use from your Sunnyslope Water District

## Drought emergency now in effect

As we enter the dry summer months, 30 percent of California's population is under a declared drought emergency, including San Benito County. In April, our county's allocation for imported surface water from the Central Valley Project's San Luis Reservoir was cut in half, and then in May it was slashed again to 25 percent.

Major state reservoirs, including San Luis Reservoir, currently contain about half the water they normally do. The reservoirs were built assuming that the Sierra Nevada snowpack would replenish them each spring and summer. But this year, that water simply didn't show up—a warning sign of potential extended drought, and a marker of climate change. Instead of flowing into rivers and reservoirs, the snowmelt was absorbed by parched soil that had not recovered from the last drought, or it evaporated into our drier atmosphere. In addition, snowpack throughout the Sierras was only 57 percent of average in April, similar to last year.



The San Luis Reservoir, which provides our local surface water, is currently at 58 percent capacity. Inset photo shows the reservoir in March 2017 at 98 percent capacity. Photos: CA Dept. of Water Resources



## Hollister depends upon surface water

In 2020, 73 percent of Sunnyslope's water came from the San Luis Reservoir, with about 27 percent coming from our five local wells. As the drought continues, both Sunnyslope and City of Hollister customers will be receiving a higher percentage of well water to make up for the shortfall in our surface water allocation. This means that tap water could be slightly harder until the drought ends.

Thankfully, the Hollister area is in better shape than many municipalities. Decades of importing water and careful management of our groundwater system by the San Benito

County Water District has replenished our groundwater basin from

historically low levels in the 1970s, otherwise we would not have well water to make up our current shortfall. (Cont. on back page)



¿Prefieres tu newsletter en español?

Por favor, visite [sunnyslopewater.org](http://sunnyslopewater.org) y haga clic en el enlace del boletín para ver o descargar. ¡Muchas gracias!

Win a \$100 gift card when you sign up for paperless billing!



Just click on the contest icon at [sunnyslopewater.org](http://sunnyslopewater.org) to enroll, and you'll be automatically entered to win a \$100 gift card to the Running Rooster restaurant! We congratulate the winner of our last contest, Angel Rueda, and thank our many customers who signed up for paperless. Your conscientiousness saves time and money, and reduces your carbon footprint. See page two for more benefits!

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Sunnyslope Water District Hollister, CA 95023 3570 Airline Hwy.



## Ridgemark sewer inspections underway

During July and August we will be inspecting all 15 miles of Sunnyslope sewer mainline. Our contractor, Able Septic Tank, will be working in the roadway, so please be alert when driving.

They will videotape the pipeline with a remote control camera, after which Sunnyslope staff will analyze footage for cracks, root intrusion, and potential blockages. The camera tracks exact locations on a geographic information system (GIS), so we can pinpoint areas that need maintenance.

The assessment will fulfill regulatory requirements, and help us prioritize long-range capital projects to prevent spills, protect public health, and safeguard the environment.



**Sunnyslope  
Water District**

*Providing reliable, high-quality, cost-effective water and sanitary services to our community, to protect human health and the environment*

3570 Airline Hwy, Hollister, CA 95023  
(831) 637-4670 • sunnyslopewater.org  
Open Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

### Free 24-hour emergency service:

If you think your water meter is leaking, or you see water gushing in the street, it is an emergency. Do not hesitate to contact us at 637-4670, day or night! Our on-call staff will return your call immediately.

The public is welcome to attend Sunnyslope Water District board meetings, held every third Tuesday of the month at 5:15 pm. To attend remotely via Zoom, please click on our homepage link.

### Board of Directors

Jerry Buzzetta, President  
James Parker, Vice-president  
Mike Alcorn  
Judi H. Johnson  
Vacant

### General Manager

Drew Lander, P.E.

## Get all your benefits at sunnyslopewater.org!

Our new website is loaded with features to save you time, money, and hassle:

- Opt in for paperless billing for a chance to win a \$100 local restaurant gift certificate (see page one). Schedule a secure payment, view your billing history, or sign up for autopay and never worry about late fees.
- Sign up to receive emergency alerts when there are outages, boil notices, or scheduled maintenance in your neighborhood.
- Get your conservation score, and see how your bill compares with others in similar households.
- View easy-to-read graphics for deep insight into your usage over months and years. Get money-saving suggestions based on your specific household.

Just visit [sunnyslopewater.org](http://sunnyslopewater.org) and click the "Manage My Bill" icon. If you need assistance, please call us at 637-4670!



## Water reliability during drought

Like many places in California, Hollister has a growing demand for water at the same time that droughts are becoming more frequent (see page one article). Sunnyslope Water, the City of Hollister, and the San Benito County Water District (SBCWD) have been working together for many years to improve water reliability and quality.

"Our long-term planning and partnership have made all the difference during dry years when we cannot count on receiving the surface water we depend upon," said Sunnyslope Water General Manager Drew Lander. "While nobody can create more water, we can make it go further by cleaning wastewater for reuse, capturing water that would otherwise be lost, and conserving water as much as possible."

### Making every drop count

The Hollister Water Reclamation Facility recycles our local wastewater (except for the Ridgemark area, which Sunnyslope treats) to use for crop irrigation and groundwater recharge. When farmers use recycled water it saves an equal amount of surface water for our community—it's like getting two gallons for the price of one.

The SBCWD, our federal water contractor, manages the county's water supply. The Hernandez Reservoir southeast of Hollister captures water from San Benito Mountain, which SBCWD releases into the San Benito River to recharge our groundwater. This in turn feeds the wells used by Sunnyslope and the City of Hollister. Nearby San Justo Reservoir provides short-term storage for our imported surface water.

During wet years when reservoirs are full, water banking allows SBCWD to store excess water outside the county for retrieval during dry years. They participate in a water banking and exchange program with the Semitropic Water Storage District located near Bakersfield, as well as in other statewide transfers and exchanges. (Cont.)

**Sunnyslope Lead Operator Manny Chavez checks the pump station at Lessalt treatment plant. From here, high-quality surface water is distributed to customers of Sunnyslope Water and the Hollister Water Utility.**



## How do Sunnyslope fees compare to other water providers?

### Approximate monthly water bill comparison

(150 gallons/day; 15,000-gallon monthly total)



**City of Santa Cruz \$262**   **San Jose Water \$164**   **San Juan Bautista \$151**   **City of Hollister \$121**   **Sunnyslope Water District \$111**

Sunnyslope Water District is a nonprofit agency voted into existence by its ratepayers. Financially, our budget goal is to match revenue to expenses, without making a profit. Your elected board of directors are uncompensated except for a small stipend for expenses, approximately \$350 per month.



**Developers are required to pay for all new water infrastructure, in addition to connection fees.**

### Local growth and water service: here's the lowdown

With new homes going up in our area, it's easy to see that Hollister is growing. We want to assure our customers that we are active participants in the development review process, leveraging for the best interests of the community.

Sunnyslope engineers review all plans, making changes and additions when needed to protect the integrity of the entire water system. We also check for compliance with CALGreen

plumbing codes and the state's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance which reduces water consumption inside and outside the house. Lot sizes in the new developments are also sized smaller, and some are being built on land converted from agricultural to residential, which has much less water demand.

Developers cover the cost of all water infrastructure for new housing, from main lines to meter boxes. In some locations, they have replaced old, deteriorated lines, saving current customers that expense. In addition, developers must pay a \$12,405 hookup fee for each home, a buy-in cost to be part of the system.

"One advantage of having more customers is that fees can be kept lower because more people are sharing the cost," said Sunnyslope Associate Engineer Rob Hillebrecht. "New hookup fees have brought in approximately \$10.5 million in the last five years, which we've used to pay down loans on the Lessalt and West Hills treatment plants. Without that income we would've had to raise rates significantly."

*Sunnyslope Water will continue to advocate for our customers to protect our community's investment, and ensure fair and equitable water service for everyone.*

### Water reliability *(Cont. from facing page)*

Due to the current drought proclamation, San Benito County is only receiving 25 percent of our normal surface water allocation from the Central Valley Project. But thanks to our county's diverse portfolio of solutions, the SBCWD is able to give Sunnyslope 1,200 more acre feet this year, lessening the deficit to 43 percent of normal. That additional 1,200 acre feet represents an equal amount of well water we will not have to pump, which preserves our groundwater basin for the future.

"All these cooperative efforts are vital, but they still aren't enough without diligent water conservation by the entire community," said Drew. "It takes everyone's combined efforts to secure our water supply for the future." *Please turn the page for water conservation tips and offers.*

## You ask; we answer!



**“How can my water bill be the same amount for months in a row?”**

Like most water suppliers, Sunnyslope charges for water use in 100 cubic feet portions (748 gallons); smaller volumes would be more costly to track. Your water meter only moves forward each time you use 100 cubic feet, so your usage can fluctuate by that much and you will still have the same reading, and be billed the same amount. Because most people are fairly consistent with their water use, it is not unusual for customers to have the same usage and billing amount for months in a row.

For the same reason, bills can fluctuate 200 cubic feet from month to month based on where the meter is at the beginning and end of the billing cycle. For example, if your current billing period ends and you've used your next 747 gallons, then the cost of that 748-gallon portion will go on your next water bill, even though you've used most of it already. If that next bill cycle ends right after you've reached another 748-gallon portion, that too will be in that billing cycle.

*We are happy to answer any and all questions from our customers. Please contact us at [billing@sunnyslopewater.org](mailto:billing@sunnyslopewater.org), or 637-4670, and your question may appear in our newsletter!*



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# It's time to double down on water conservation!

*Did you know . . . half of local water use is for landscaping, and up to 50 percent of it can be lost to evaporation and runoff?*

That's right: if you have an automatic irrigation system, chances are it's the biggest water waster you own. With Stage One Voluntary Water Conservation now in effect, efficient water usage is paramount, both outside and inside the house. (Please visit the Water Resources Agency of San Benito County website at [wrasbc.org](http://wrasbc.org) for specific guidelines.)

Our community has a great track record for water conservation. During the 2015-2017 drought, Sunnyslope customers reduced usage by an admirable 26 percent, but since then our usage has crept up again by 10 percent. *Please do all you can to follow these tips—a good effort now can help prevent further restrictions.*

**Outdoor watering** Avoid watering between 9 am and 5 pm when evaporation is highest. Programmed irrigation and unattended sprinklers should not be used more than three days a week, and shouldn't be on for more than 15 minutes at each planting area. If there is runoff on your sidewalk or street, you are wasting water and money. For our local clay soil, use the "cycle and soak" setting, or hand water in five-minute intervals, letting it soak in for an hour in-between. Plant native and drought-tolerant plants, and use mulch to reduce evaporation.

**Washing vehicles** Take your vehicle to a commercial car wash where recirculating water and pollutant capture are required. At home, use a bucket and sponge, and a self-closing hose nozzle to rinse. Washing on the ground, not in your driveway, keeps toxins out of the water system.

**Don't use your hose to clean your patio, driveway, or sidewalk.**

**Fix leaks and breaks** Now is the time to stop paying for water you don't use. Fix dripping faucets and running toilets, and check your outdoor irrigation system often. Call the friendly folks at WRASBC to take advantage of a free water efficiency survey (see sidebar).

**Household tips:** Don't leave water running while you wash up, brush your teeth, shave, or do dishes. Take shorter showers, and shut off the water while you lather up. Wash vegetables in a bowl, then use the water on plants. Run the wash machine and dishwasher only when full.

**Businesses:** Restaurants should only serve water upon request; hotels should encourage visitors to decline daily towel/linen service.

*Working together, we can conserve and protect our community's precious water resources, now and for future generations!*

## Drought emergency (Cont. from page one)

The importance of our precious groundwater cannot be overstated: the health of the environment, our economy, and our very quality of life depend upon it. Yet it is becoming more and more difficult to sustain our groundwater levels due to the climate crisis, increasing demand, and the unreliability of imported surface water.

While our supply is good for the rest of the year, if the drought continues groundwater levels will drop. That's why it is vital that we make water conservation a part of our everyday lifestyle—whether we are in a drought or not. Please check out the guidelines above, and implement as many as you can to ensure our future water supply, and a vibrant future for our community.

## Rebates and free stuff to help you conserve

Sunnyslope and other local water agencies formed the Water Resources Association of San Benito County (WRASBC) to help the public conserve water. Check out these great offers that will help you save on your water bill, and preserve our precious groundwater.

### Free home/yard water survey

Have an expert check for leaks and inefficiencies. Learn how to program your irrigation controller for maximum economy and productivity.

### Free hose nozzles, shower heads, and aerators

WRASBC will install these high-quality devices during your home survey, or call the number below for pickup at their office on 30 Mansfield Road.

### Irrigation hardware rebate

Receive a rebate up to \$100 on qualifying water-wise hose timers, rain sensors, and rotator nozzles and sprinklers.

### Free garden design

Choose from three different designs (\$500 value) that feature drought-tolerant plants.

### Free toilet or toilet rebate

Get a free high-efficiency toilet to replace your circa 1992 or older model, or get a \$75 rebate to buy your own. WRASBC will also recycle your old toilet.

### Water softener rebate

Get a \$300 rebate for demolishing your old, self-regulating machine that uses salt/potassium, or a \$250 rebate to replace it with a more environmentally friendly offsite regeneration service. Self-regulating water softeners contaminate our groundwater with salt, and drive up the cost of water recycling.

Please visit [wrasbc.org](http://wrasbc.org) for program details, or call Shawn at 637-4378.



Evaporation is high from 9 am to 5 pm, so irrigate before or after.

Top photo: Conventional spray nozzles like this one lose a lot of water to evaporation. Swap them out with high-efficiency rotary nozzles—and get a rebate up to \$100 (see sidebar).

