

Winter 2022

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Water lines

News you can use from your Sunnyslope Water District

Drought update: how are we doing?

As reported in our previous issue, due to the drought San Benito County received only 25 percent of its normal surface water allocation last year. In addition, on December 1 we received notification from the Department of Water Resources that the surface water allocation for all State Water Project recipients, including us, will be zero in 2022.

“Zero allocations have never been announced this early before, and it underscores the seriousness of our state’s water shortage,” said Drew Lander, Sunnyslope Water District General Manager. “As we go to press, the Hollister area remains under Stage One Voluntary Water Conservation measures, but that will likely change to mandatory statewide restrictions early in 2022 if our rainfall outlook does not improve.”

As of December 12, The San Luis Reservoir which supplies our surface water was only 24 percent full, compared to the historic average of 42 percent for that date. The Hollister Conduit, which transports the San Luis water to our West Hills and Lessalt treatment plants, was turned off last August. Before the shut-off, we added our 25 percent allocation to the stored water in our local San Justo Reservoir, which is now supplying all our surface water (see related story, page two). For cost-efficiency, we are currently treating and distributing water from the West Hills plant only. We are taking advantage of the temporary Lessalt shutdown to perform maintenance and evaluation of the equipment and infrastructure there.



Sunnyslope Water Operator Luis Vasquez prepares to inspect the micro-filtration unit at the Lessalt treatment plant. With the plant temporarily shut down, we are taking the opportunity to perform preventative maintenance on our community’s vital water treatment equipment.



**¿Prefieres tu
newsletter en español?**

Por favor, visite sunnyslopewater.org
y haga clic en el enlace del
boletín para ver o descargar.
¡Muchas gracias!

Local water supply is sufficient—for now

Hollister is in a better position than many other municipalities because we have groundwater to offset our shortage of imported water. Thanks to years of surface water allocations and careful management by the San Benito County Water District, our aquifer was nearly (Cont. on page 3)



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

Just click on the contest icon at sunnyslopewater.org to enroll in paperless billing, and you’ll be automatically entered to win a \$100 gift card to Paine’s restaurant! Congratulations go to our current winners, Norberto and Claudia Hernandez. We also thank our many conscientious customers who signed up for paperless billing to save time and money, and reduce their carbon footprint. Turn the page to see more benefits of having an online account!

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Office opens Feb. 1!

As the pandemic continues, we encourage customers who need assistance to contact us by phone or email. However, if you prefer to visit our office, we will be ready to serve you in person starting February 1. To protect customers and staff, we have installed glass safety partitions and require masks for unvaccinated customers. We can also meet with you outside.

Fillable applications for new service, stop service, and change of address are available at sunnyslopedwater.org. Completed forms can be emailed, faxed, or put in the drop box at our entrance—or come inside as of Feb. 1 and our billing specialist Bethany Clinkenbeard (shown above) will be happy to assist you!



**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 • sunnyslopedwater.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 the board meeting link at sunnyslopedwater.org.

Board of Directors

Jerry Buzzetta, President
James Parker, Vice-president
Mike Alcorn
Dorothy (Dee) Brown
Ed Mauro

General Manager
Drew Lander, P.E.

Get more: sign in to sunnyslopedwater.org!

An online account saves time, money, and hassle. In addition, we are currently installing new water meters which will add many more free, convenient services to those listed below. Don't miss out! Sign in today, and watch your newsletter for updates.

- 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 water conservation score. View your usage over months and years. See how your bill compares with others.
- Receive money-saving suggestions tailored to your specific household.

Just visit sunnyslopedwater.org and click the WaterSmart sign-in on the right of the home page. If you need help, please call us at 637-4670!



The zebra mussel connection:

Ensuring water quality during drought

Sunnyslope Water continues to provide safe, reliable, high-quality water during the drought—despite challenges that are unique to our county's water storage system. Before the Hollister Conduit was turned off, we took our reduced allocation of imported surface water and stored it in our local San Justo Reservoir. We blend this water with groundwater from our five local wells to cover our surface water shortfall.

"Adequate dissolved oxygen is vital for good quality water," said Sunnyslope Superintendent Jose J. Rodriguez. "Without it, more minerals dissolve into the water, effecting appearance, taste, and smell." When the conduit is flowing, water is aerated as it runs to our treatment plants. By contrast, there is no turbulence in our local reservoir, and the problem is exacerbated by its longtime infestation of non-native, invasive zebra mussels. In fact, aeration is not desirable at San Justo Reservoir because that would increase the mussel population. As it is, connecting pipelines must be continually cleared of mussels or they would become blocked. In addition, as the San Justo water flows into our treatment plant, its pH levels, state of oxidation, and percentage of dissolved minerals constantly changes, which requires continual adjustments.

"To meet all these challenges we've installed additional mechanical controls, including a chlorine pump to oxidize the water," said Jose. Controls are programmed into Sunnyslope's SCADA system, which constantly analyzes real-time data and adjusts treatment levels accordingly. "Besides mechanical monitoring, our operators test water chemistry throughout the plant at regular intervals. As always, our goal is to deliver consistently high-quality water to our customers 24 hours a day."

**Sunnyslope Water Operator
Ernie Eclarin tests manganese
levels in drinking water at the
West Hills treatment plant.**



How do Sunnyslope fees compare to other water providers?

Approximate monthly water bill comparison for average household

(500 gallons per day; 15,000-gallon monthly total)



City of Santa Cruz \$280 **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.



Sunnyslope solves longtime cannery odor issue

You may have noticed that the unpleasant odor that comes from the San Benito Foods (SBF) industrial wastewater ponds was conspicuously absent last summer. That's because in June 2021, your Sunnyslope Water District entered into contract to take over operation of the facility. A Hollister icon, the historic SBF cannery has been packing California tomatoes for over 100 years and is one of our area's biggest employers.

The iconic San Benito Foods cannery is one of Hollister's biggest employers.

Copyright 2020 by San Benito Foods, reprinted with permission

"Sunnyslope's knowledge and expertise in wastewater treatment has earned them respect in the industry and high marks with the Regional Water Quality Control Board," said Don Carr, SBF Operations Environmental Health and Safety Manager. "Their professionalism helped us realize a successful season and we look forward to continuing our beneficial partnership."

To remedy the situation, Sunnyslope added an additional treatment process to oxidize and offgas the wastewater before it enters the ponds.

"Our staff and board of directors welcomes this opportunity to step up and support San Benito Foods and our community," said Drew Lander, Sunnyslope Water General Manager. "It's a win-win for everyone as it supports local business, ensures regulatory compliance, and protects our local water resources."

Drought update *(Cont. from page 1)*

full when the drought was declared. However, we must not grow complacent.

"Local groundwater alone falls far short of meeting our county's municipal and agricultural water needs, and we have not received our full allotment of imported surface water in over 10 years," said Drew. "If reduced allotments continue, our groundwater will eventually be in overdraft so it's vital we conserve as much as we can."

Runoff from the meager Sierra snowpack never reached reservoirs last winter because it was absorbed by drought-parched soil. According to the California Department of Water Resources, our state needs 140 percent of average precipitation this rainy season to reach runoff conditions. With average annual precipitation at 23 inches per year, that means we need 32 inches of rain to rehydrate soil sufficiently so runoff can reach reservoirs—a historically rare occurrence.

As the climate crisis continues, droughts are becoming more common, and rain more sporadic. To be part of the solution, please visit the Water Resources Association of San Benito County at wrasbc.org for free water saving devices and tips.

**You ask;
we answer!**



“Why does my water appear tinted?”

On rare occasions there may be a subtle tint to tap water which can be seen when filling a white tub or sink.

The tint is often from manganese, a naturally occurring mineral found in surface water worldwide.

When we oxidize water at the treatment plant to improve taste, the manganese in the water precipitates out and becomes visible as a slight yellow tint. We filter out the manganese and other minerals, but on occasion it can continue to precipitate after filtration, causing tinted water to enter the distribution system.

Tinted water is perfectly safe to drink and has no taste or odor. If you find it bothersome, do not attempt to flush out your lines because that will only bring more tinted water into your home that you don't want to use.

We are constantly monitoring the composition of water exiting our plants, so if you wait an hour or so the issue will be corrected. Check the tap closest to the main line in the street to see if it's clear. Please feel free to call us whenever you have questions about the water coming out of your tap.

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



This product is made of material from well-managed FSC®-certified forests and from recycled materials. Printed by a certified Monterey Bay Area Green Business with vegetable-based inks. Please recycle!



Do you have a water leak?

Here's how to check...

Conserve precious water—pay only for what you use!

Sometimes leaks aren't as obvious as a dripping faucet or running toilet, so it's a good idea to check for leaks regularly. Visit sunnyslopewater.org to compare your monthly water usage and check for unexplained spikes. For a free home and yard water survey to check for inefficiencies, please call Water Resources Association of San Benito County (WRASBC) at the number below. To perform your own leak check, follow these directions:

1. Turn off all faucets and appliances that use water.

Don't forget the ice maker, dishwasher, and washing machine.

2. Check if your water meter is recording flow.

Carefully remove the cement cover of your water meter, which is located near the street. On older, round meters with a numbers dial, the leak indicator is a small plastic triangle or asterisk (▲*), usually blue or red, that rotates clockwise. Carefully observe the leak indicator; if it's moving at all, you have a leak. If you have a newer meter with a digital readout, flip open the plastic cap to reveal the digital display. If you see a faucet icon below the numbers you have a leak. Close the lid and open it again to see a new screen that shows the gallons of water per minute that are leaking through the meter. Leave the lid open for the next step.

3. Determine if the leak is inside or outside your home.

Shut off the main water valve to the inside of your home and make sure any irrigation systems are off. If your leak indicator is still rotating or your digital readout is still recording flow, you have a leak outside your house. If the leak indicator has stopped moving or your digital readout shows zero flow, the leak is inside the house.

4. Locate the leak.

Look for dripping faucets and moisture under sinks. See if there is standing water around the base of your tub, shower, water heater, dishwasher, or clothes washer. Check your toilet for leaks (see sidebar).

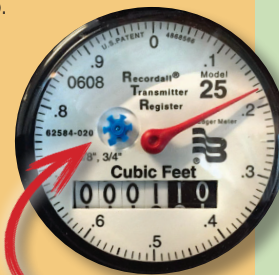
Inspect walls and ceilings for discoloration or peeling from a leaking pipe. If you have a concrete slab foundation, a warm spot on your floor combined with a higher gas bill might mean a broken hot water pipe. Signs of an outdoor irrigation leak include: eroded soil, low water pressure, dead plants due to a leak further up the line, pooling water around a sprinkler head, or a lush green spot around the leak.

Need help? Call WRASBC at 637-4378.

WRASBC was formed by Sunnyslope Water and other local water agencies to provide free water conservation services. They can find leaks, advise you on the correct course of action, perform minor repairs like toilet flapper or faucet washer replacements, and install low-flow shower heads and other water-saving devices. To learn more about free services, and rebates on toilets and irrigation hardware, please visit wrasbc.org. Working together, we can conserve and protect our community's precious water resources!



On new digital meters the leak indicator is a faucet icon.



On older meters the leak indicator is a plastic triangle or asterisk-shaped dial.

Help!



Is your toilet trying to tell you something?

A leaky toilet can have a huge impact on your water bill before you even detect a problem.

Check your toilet for these signs:

Sounds coming from the toilet when it's not in use

Handle needing a jiggle to stop water from running

Having to hold down the handle for a complete flush

Water trickling down the inside of the bowl long after flushing. This "silent leak" can be intermittent and hard to detect.

See caption below for a simple test.

Toilet running intermittently on its own in between uses (phantom flush)

Water dripping out of the refill tube into the overflow pipe inside the tank

Water running over the top of the overflow inside the tank

Many toilet leaks are caused by a worn flapper valve, which is inexpensive and easily replaced. For free assistance and a water efficiency check of your home, please call our local Water Resource Association of San Benito County at 637-4378; for more information, visit wrasbc.org.

SILENT LEAK TEST

A silent toilet leak can waste as much as 500 gallons of water per day! Make sure you don't have one: remove your toilet tank lid and add a few drops of food coloring to dye the water. Wait about 30 minutes without flushing and check to see if the dye has leaked into the bowl.

