

SCMU Review

(schmoo ri-vyoo) n. items of interest and information from your Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities

No. 71 SPRING 2021 SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES 212 LOCUST STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831)420-5220 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

Speaking of Water Supply...



THIS ISSUE OF THE SCMU REVIEW includes our fifth annual report-out on work done to further the Water Supply Advisory Committee's (WSAC) recommendations for improved water security.

A quick flashback to 2014: the community was deep into a multi-year drought, and plans for desalination were shelved by the City Council in favor of letting the community decide a path to water security. Fourteen members, representing a variety of community interests, were appointed by City Council and a deep dive into the city's water system began. At the end of the 18-month process the WSAC provided Council with a set of recommendations, which were unanimously approved.

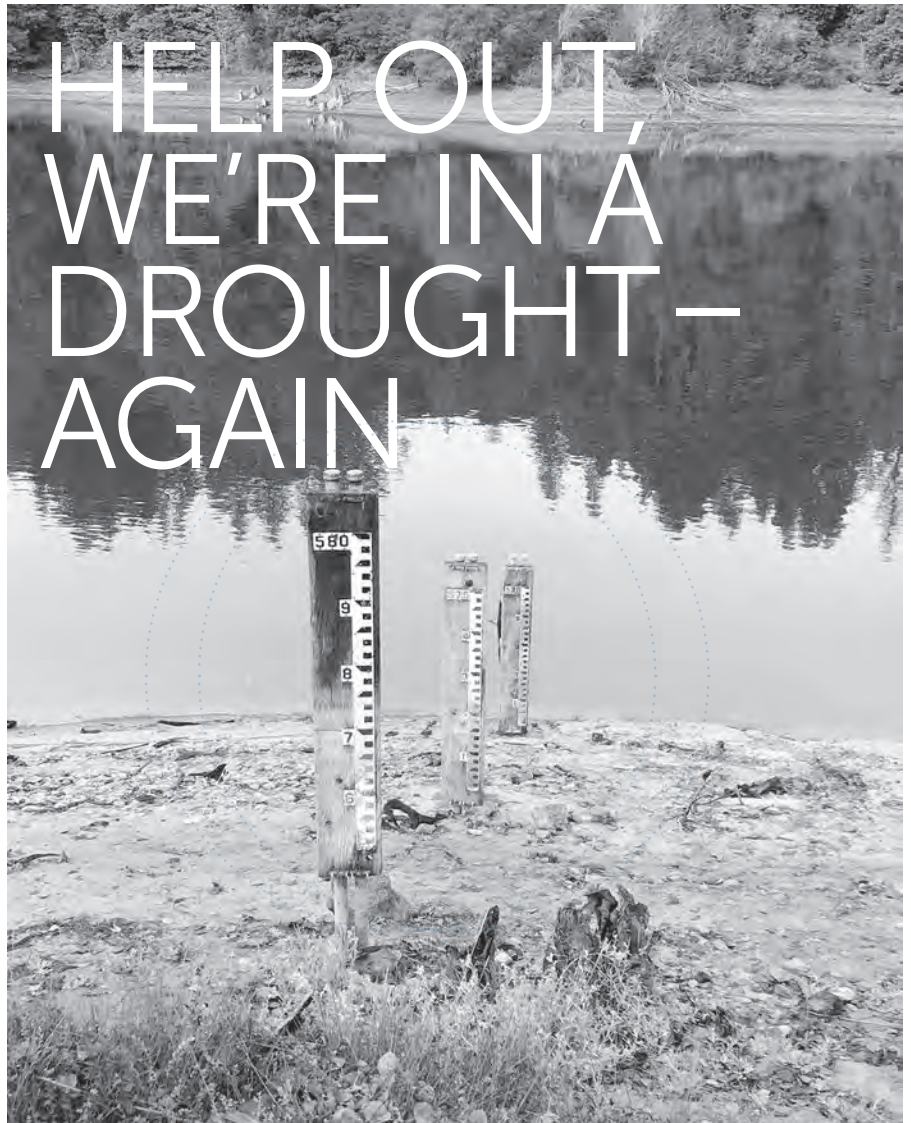
Fast forward to 2021. With this year's dry conditions, it's beginning to feel eerily reminiscent of the many years of the "ridiculously resilient ridge," which spurred on the work of the WSAC.

The good news is that thanks to the WSAC, we're well on our way to having a more reliable system, and more reliable supply.

Read on to learn more about that.

Speaking of water supply, it's probably no surprise that this year has shaped up to be classified as "critically dry." As such, a Stage 1 Water Shortage Warning takes effect May 1. You can learn about that in this issue, too.

Cheers,
Rosemary Menard



HELP OUT, WE'RE IN A DROUGHT— AGAIN

THOUGH SANTA CRUZ HAS HAD WHAT WE AT THE WATER DEPARTMENT classify as a critically dry year, we're not so worried about running short on water this year. Our drinking water reservoir, Loch Lomond, holds about one year's worth of water, and is currently at about 72 percent of capacity.

It's next year that we worry about, and the year after that.

Should we have another dry year, or a few more dry years, and our reservoir not refill, our community could be in a world of hurt. It's not the one-off dry year that affects Santa Cruz — it's when we have multiple dry years in a row.

That was the case in 2014, when we had to implement mandatory water rationing with penalties.

This year we're implementing water allocations at a Stage 1 "Warning" level. A Stage 1 Warning calls for a 10 percent reduction in overall system use.

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WSAC ANNUAL REPORT 2020

UNDERLYING ALL OF THE WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S (WSAC) recommendations for water supply security is the assumption that the community continues to be conservative with water use (also known as “demand management”). In addition to conservation, the WSAC promoted three “elements” to improve water supply. Those elements are 1) In Lieu, 2) Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR), 3) Advanced Treated Recycled Water or Seawater Desalination. Read on to learn about progress made on each element in 2020.

Element 0: Demand Management

- **WSAC RECOMMENDATION:** Increase Water Conservation to further reduce annual demand by up to 25omgy by 2035.
- **2020 PROGRESS UPDATE:** The community continued to use water at low levels. There has been little rebound since water rationing ended in 2015.
- **NEXT STEPS:** We're updating the city's Urban Water Management Plan, including updated forecasts for demand and any associated reductions that may be needed.

Element 1: In Lieu

- **WSAC RECOMMENDATION:** Transfer excess surface water between water districts during off-peak season. This will allow neighboring water agencies, who rely on groundwater to meet their customer demands, to rest groundwater wells so they can recharge.

- **2020 PROGRESS UPDATE:** We completed the second phase of a water transfer study with Soquel Creek Water District in January 2020. This was earlier than planned due to the lack of excess winter water last year. A total of 33.7 million gallons was transferred.

- **NEXT STEPS:** The City and Soquel Creek Water District are looking at the possibility of extending the transfer agreement for another five-year term, and refining the study objectives.

Element 2: Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)

- **WSAC RECOMMENDATION:** Inject excess winter surface water into local aquifers for storage, and use at a later time.

- **2020 PROGRESS UPDATE:** We continued studies that we began in 2016 to look at things

like how much excess water could be available to inject into groundwater basins, how much can be retrieved after injection, what kinds of impacts ASR can have on water quality.

A pilot test at one of our wells was put on hold until more data could be collected to analyze possible water quality impacts.

- **NEXT STEPS:** Finalize groundwater modeling to identify the best locations for new ASR wells. New wells should be able to maximize both how much groundwater basins can be recharged, as well as provide sustainable supply.

Continue pilot testing on Santa Cruz wells. Study the potential for injecting advanced-treated recycled water into aquifers instead of, or in combination with, excess surface water.

Element 3: Advanced Treated Recycled Water or Seawater Desalination

- **WSAC RECOMMENDATION:** Explore the feasibility of using recycled or desalinated water.

- **2020 PROGRESS UPDATE:** Modeling is underway to be able to compare the costs and benefits of using surface water sources versus advanced treated recycled water to replenish groundwater basins.

Partner with Soquel Creek Water District and their PureWaterSoquel (PWS) project to provide source water (i.e., treated wastewater from the City's Waste Water Treatment Facility) for their groundwater replenishment project.

City Water and Public Works staff studied possible locations for infrastructure to supply advanced treated recycled water for irrigation at La Barranca Park, and for an off-site truck fill station.

Water and Public Works staff began studying possible use of recycled water to irrigate DeLaveaga Park.

- **NEXT STEPS:** Continue to refine alternatives to use advanced treated recycled water for groundwater recharge.

Continue to work with Soquel Creek Water District on the design and construction of the PWS project, including possible opportunities for City projects.



Members of the Water Supply Advisory Committee

There Are No “Flushable” Wipes

OUR CITY IS EXPERIENCING AN ONGOING PROBLEM that is costing our municipality and community a great deal. The issue is caused by so called “flushable” wipes products being flushed down toilets. Wipes are not biodegradable and therefore frequently clog plumbing and City sewers.

No matter what the label may state, there are absolutely NO “flushable wipes.” Whether for babies, adults or cleaning, wipes belong in the trash.

Over the past year, wipes that have been flushed in Santa Cruz have caused many significant sewer backups and private lateral sewer discharges. This has cost the City a great deal in staff time for emergency responses while homeowners have had to pay for the cleanup and repair of their private lateral sewer discharges and related plumbing bills.

Although some brands of wipes include a “do not flush” logo, it is often barely noticeable while a great many product labels include the word “flushable.” Such packaging, unfortunately, encourages consumers to flush these wipes down the toilet.

This is an industry-wide problem that you can help prevent by placing any used wipes in the trash.

Each week our Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment Facility crew removes 20,000 pounds of grit and rags including wipes before wastewater can be processed.

Despite the rigorous preventive wastewater system maintenance our City conducts, the wipes problem persists. We staff two sewer cleaning crews that work all year long to clean the wastewater system and remove wipes using specialized expensive equipment. Still, our Wastewater Treatment Facility team removes 20,000-pounds of grit and rags including wipes *each week* before wastewater can be processed.

This is typical of wastewater plants nationwide. A recent study indicates that California wastewater agencies spend \$47 million annually to deal with wet wipes.

Please do your part to help eradicate the wipes problem. Remember: Only human waste and toilet paper may be flushed; be sure to trash everything else including tissues, paper towels and those so-called “flushable” wipes — thank you!

To learn more about the wastewater treatment process, we invite you to tour our plant in English or Spanish at:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/Wastewater



Say No to Single-Use Disposables

WE CAN ALL REDUCE WASTE by opting out of single-use cutlery and other single-use items such as condiment packets when placing take-out food orders. This is a double win that supports our local restaurants as well as the environment.

Available “Upon Request” is mandated in the City’s Environmentally Acceptable Food Packaging and Products Ordinance that intends to reduce waste and litter.

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ

FOOD WASTE WEBINAR SERIES
KEEP YOUR CASH OUT OF THE TRASH!

Don't miss out on the raffish opportunities!
<https://wastedfoodwebinarsc.eventbrite.com>

- April 6th 5-6p
- May 4th 5-6p
- June 1st 5-6p

SAVE THE DATE:

Food Waste Webinar

KEEP YOUR CASH OUT OF THE TRASH as you learn about food waste at our June 1 webinar. A whopping 25 percent of all the material that goes to our landfill is food waste or food scraps! Sign up at:

<https://wastedfoodwebinarsc.eventbrite.com>



Recycling Guide

OUR ANNUAL RECYCLING GUIDE that was mailed to all City residents in January is now available online in Spanish at:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/RecycleRight



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> Help Out... Drought — Again from page 1

For our residential customers, the bulk of water users, that means they'll be provided a monthly allotment (also known as budget) of water that they'll need to stay within. For example, a three-person residential account will be allotted five *CCF per month. Many of our customers are already using water within the five CCF allotment; others may need to adjust their use.

We won't be applying penalties this summer if your use goes over your allotment, but should we need to move to Stage 2 restrictions next summer, penalties will be applied. So please use this summer to "practice" staying within your allotted amount.

The Stage 1 Warning takes effect May 1. You can find detailed information about how the warning affects residential, commercial, and irrigation accounts on our website at:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/Stage1

*CCF (*centum cubic feet*) is the unit of measure for drinking water.
One CCF = 748 gallons, so five CCF = 3,740 gallons.

PUSHY, BUT IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD (Trust Us!)

DON'T YOU HATE PUSHY PEOPLE? So do we! So it's kind of awkward because we're about to push. We really, really, REALLY want you to try using Water Smart, and we're pretty sure that once you've signed up and see what it can do for you, you'll thank us for being pushy. OK, maybe not actually "thank" us (we're a public agency — we get it), but maybe you'll understand why we pushed.

What is **WaterSmart** and why are we pushing it, you ask?

It's an online tool you can use to track your water use, diagnose a high water bill, set alerts for unusual usage, and — just in time for Stage 1 water allocations — get personalized recommendations for saving water. In addition, it's a way for us to get important and/or emergency water information directly to you. Doesn't that sound smart? Do you see why we're pushing?

We hope you'll sign up for WaterSmart. It just takes a couple of minutes and all you need is your account number and your zip code. You can learn more and sign up at:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/Stage1

You'll be glad you did — "trust us."

Loch Lomond is Open!

WE'RE HAPPY TO REPORT that the Loch Lomond Recreation Area is open again, and rumor has it that after a quiet 2020 season, fish are biting!

Whenever we have dry conditions and the lake elevation goes down (like this year), we invariably find lots of old fishing line along the shore. Fishing line is harmful to many species that call Loch Lomond home, and even when line is disposed of in trash bins, it still goes to a landfill, creating the same hazards for wildlife.

This year, we're partnering with California State Parks, the California Coastal Commission, and the California Boating Clean and Green Program to provide stations to recycle fishing line.

Be sure to ask one of our friendly Loch Lomond rangers where you can safely recycle your old fishing line.



At Loch Lomond Recreational Area, you'll now find "Reel In and Recycle" receptacles for old fishing lines.