

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

Ventura approves \$47M in water projects

Some residents express concern on city's growth

By Arlene Martinez
Ventura County Star 10/03/2014

Although officials say the work is for upgrades and improving system reliability, a handful of Ventura residents challenged the wisdom of approving a \$47 million bond for water and wastewater projects in a time of drought.

The money, approved Monday night by the Ventura City Council, is part of a package of work identified by consultants as necessary to update, maintain and improve the city's water supply and wastewater processes.

In coming years, the city plans roughly \$74 million worth of capital improvements, such as rehabbing pump stations and replacing waterlines.

An additional \$62 million in wastewater projects is planned.

The money approved Monday will go to three water projects: wells, \$8.9 million; a storage tank retrofit, \$2.3 million; and waterline replacements, \$6.8 million.

It also will go to three wastewater projects: the disinfection facility, \$11.6 million; equipment replacement at the wastewater plant, \$11.5 million; and sewer line replacements, \$1.9 million. The totals includes extra for contingencies.

For resident Dan Cormode, the problem lies with the documents Ventura Water uses for planning.

He said the documents project the city's water supply will hold steady at 18,835 acre-feet per year from 2015-19 despite hundreds of planned new residential units.

There are "too many obvious errors" in the report, he said.

That figure reflects supply, not actual use, which is why it stays constant, said Nancy Broschart, management analyst for Ventura Water.

Resident Laura Gulovsen accused the city of withholding information on water use. In response, Ventura Water General Manager Shana Epstein told the council the city does not release the use of specific customers.

Resident Roberta Scott said the city was in a "megadrought. ... We should all be living within our water means. ... We need to stop adding users."

Council member Carl Morehouse said he thought the work was for existing

infrastructure, not creating capacity.

“If we stopped everything today, we’re going to need to fix what we got,” Morehouse said.

Epstein agreed.

“This is not about new water,” she said, adding that the scope of the projects had been presented in several public meetings.

Assistant Finance Director Rudy Livingston expects the sale of 30year bonds to go through by the end of October.

According to the sale agreement, the city expects the water service area to be “fully built out in 2035 with an estimated population of 140,000.”

Meanwhile, a drive to stop development continues to grow.

The College Area Community Council adopted a resolution last week that “supports a moratorium as soon as legally possible on new construction, water hookups and connections in the city of Ventura until the water supply is assured.”

The City Council at its Sept. 22 meeting directed staff members to look into the pros and cons of a moratorium, the legal ramifications of imposing one and actions other cities are taking.

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More Green For Less Lawn

Turf removal program given extra funding

By Rachel McGrath Special to The Star
Ventura County Star 10/02/2014



Kelly Stark walks through the front yard of his Camarillo home. Stark received a \$1,600 rebate from the Calleguas Municipal Water District after replacing grass in the yard. JUAN CARLO/THE STAR

A rebate program that rewards those who replace their lawns with artificial turf or drought-tolerant landscaping is proving so popular with Ventura County residents that the program is being given extra funding.

The Calleguas Municipal Water District, which supplies water to about three-quarters of the county's population, has allocated \$800,000 to its conservation budget since the start of the fiscal year July 1, and already \$625,000 of it has been or will be paid out in rebates for turf removal.

The district's board voted Sept. 17 to approve an additional \$1 million for the conservation budget so that residential customers can continue to take advantage of the incentives.

"What's driven the current level of interest is the drought conditions, and that and the rates impact are finally starting to resonate," said Eric Bergh, the district's director of resources.

The turf removal program administered by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has been in place for about 18 months.

Metropolitan, the wholesale supplier of water from the State Water Project to Calleguas and other member agencies, in May increased its rebate from \$1 to \$2 per square foot of turf.

At the same time Calleguas decided to fund an additional contribution of \$1 per square foot. That total rebate of \$3 per square foot is what has driven the explosion in demand, Bergh said.

Rebates are handed out on a first-come, first-served basis. If demand continues at the current rate, Bergh said, the district likely will go through the additional \$1 million by the end of 2014.

It's estimated that it takes 42 gallons of water a year to maintain a square foot of turf.

The estimated water savings return on Calleguas' \$1.6 million is more than 68 million gallons per year, or 210 acre-feet of water, district officials say. That's the equivalent of the average annual water demand of 400 families.

"It's about saving water and eking out reserves," Bergh said. "We have no idea when the drought will end, and so we're encouraging customers to take advantage of the crisis to make a difference in their outdoor water use."

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Letters

Fracking water

Brent Meeker, Camarillo

Some want to celebrate fracking as a U.S. triumph; something that simultaneously provides more energy sources and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by replacing coal with oil and gas.

Sadly, they willfully overlook the fact that fracking uses about 5 million gallons of water per well. That's why oil companies are buying up water rights, paying several times what municipal water systems can.

Fracking in Texas now uses about as much water as a city of 100,000. Maybe that doesn't seem like too much, even in a drought-stricken region, but there's an important difference.

Water used for fracking is essentially destroyed. It is polluted with solvents and detergents and left deep in the ground where it will never be recycled.

The water used by a municipality or by farmers isn't gone. It goes back into the ground or evaporates to return as rain.

While it's true that using natural gas and oil reduces carbon dioxide emissions by displacing coal burning, the reduction is only to about 60 percent. It is not zero or some small number.

So fracking destroys water and makes it cheaper to keep polluting the atmosphere. If frackers had to pay to recycle the water they use and scrub out the carbon dioxide they're putting into the air, it would cost more than nuclear and wind and solar power.

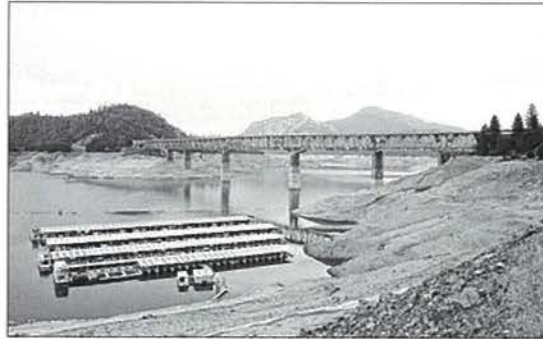
That's how to get rich keep the profit private and the costs public. The free-marketers don't want any government regulation interfering environmental exploitation, but the market doesn't look more than a few years into the future.

I don't trust government regulators any more than the next guy, but I trust the people. If they have the facts they can drive lawmakers and they can use the initiative process.

One of driest water years ever in California concludes

Precipitation less than 60% of the average

By The Associated Press
Ventura County Star 10/01/2014



Houseboats are docked Sept. 17 at Lake Shasta's Bay Bridge resort near Redding. After three years of drought the water level at the lake has dramatically receded. California Department of Water Resources director Mark Cowin said it is essential to use water sparingly. Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — California officials are urging residents and businesses to keep conserving water as the state ends another extremely dry “water year” with no guarantee the coming year will be any wetter.

The 2014 water year that ends Tuesday is one of the driest on record, with the state getting less than 60 percent of the average precipitation, according to the state Department of Water Resources. The 2015 water year begins Wednesday.

The state's major reservoirs held only 57 percent of average water storage Sept. 1, officials said.

Department Director Mark Cowin said “day-to-day conservation — wise, sparing use of water — is essential as we face the possibility of a fourth dry winter,” which is typically California's rainy season.

Water officials say recent storms, while encouraging, haven't eased the state's water woes, and forecasters can't predict whether California will get enough major storms to end the record drought.

This year Gov. Jerry Brown declared a statewide drought emergency and called on residents to reduce water usage. The state and federal governments have drastically reduced water deliveries to Central Valley farms, and the state water board approved fines of up to \$500 for wasting water.

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Letters

Severe water shortage

Robert J. Ruhr, Thousand Oaks

I recently read articles about people living in the Central Valley in towns whose wells have run dry. They not only have to have fresh drinking water trucked in, but they also have water trucked in that is poured into holding tanks by the side of their houses.

This water is then used for taking showers (by pouring cupfuls of water over their heads), and also for pouring into their toilets to flush waste away. And we Californians are using this precious resource for watering our lawns? What a terrible waste!

If we are not willing to stop watering our lawns or unable to because of ordinances, then our Legislature should consider passing laws that at least temporarily do not allow watering lawns. Exceptions can be allowed, such as watering trees or other lawn plants that are difficult and expensive to replace, to say nothing of the time required to grow new ones.

We can live without green lawns during this serious drought; we can't live without water. Conserve! Seriously, we can run out of water, and in fact already are in some places.

Reread the sentence above regarding how people get drinking water, take showers and flush their toilets. Would you rather live like that or have a brown lawn?

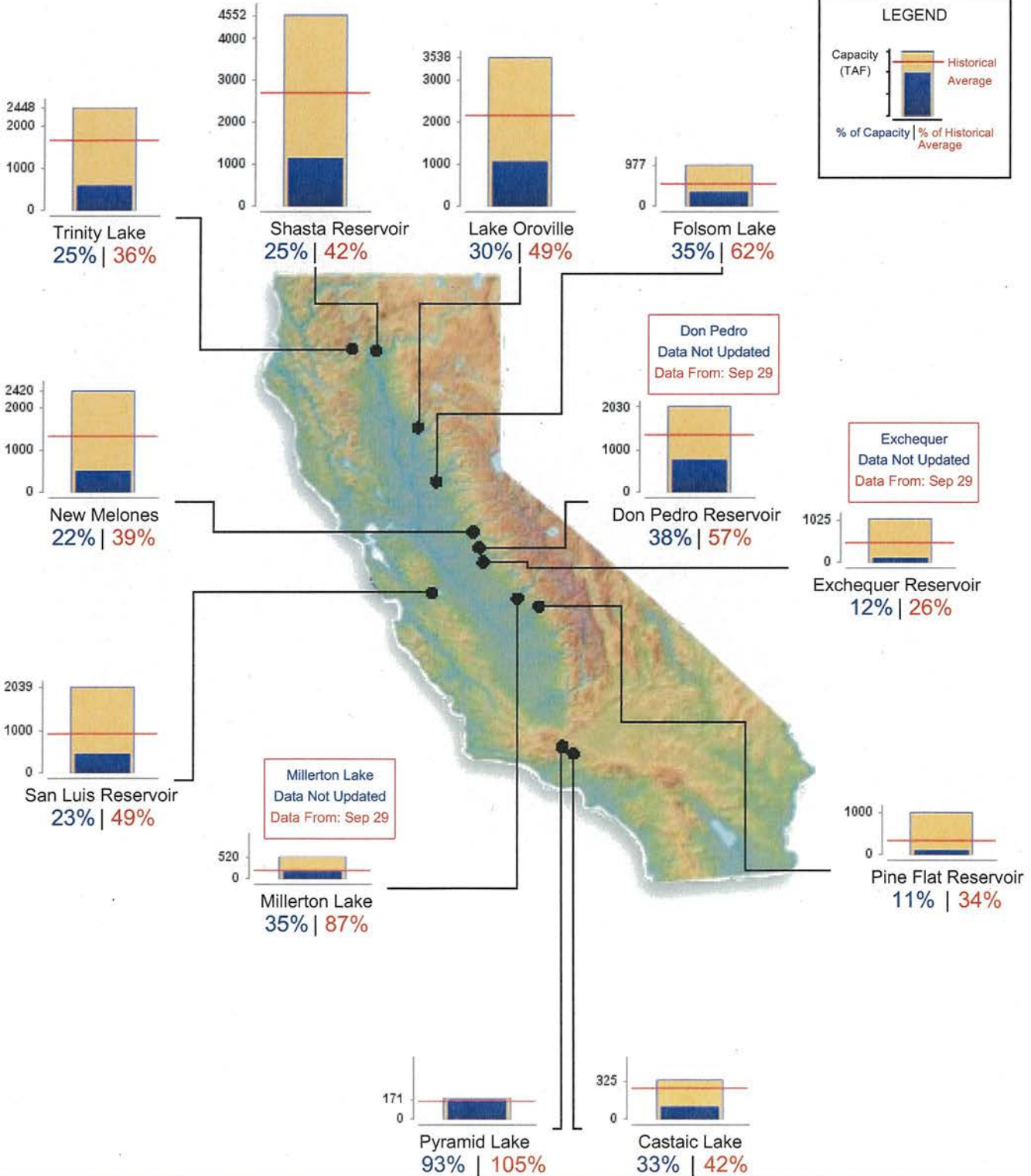
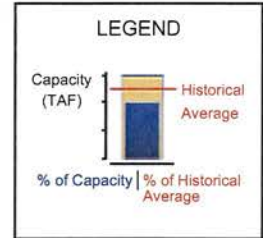
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Reservoir Conditions

Ending At Midnight - September 30, 2014

CURRENT RESERVOIR CONDITIONS



Drought-conscious residents turn the water tables on public agencies



During 2014 drought. Who watches the watchmen?

By MATT STEVENS
LA TIMES 9/30/2014

ConservationLos Angeles Department of Water and PowerJerry BrownCalifornia
DroughtEric Garcetti

Californians broadcasting video of what appear to be government agencies breaking their own water-use rules

Residents filing an increasing number of complaints about wasteful water use by neighbors and on city property

Officials say their agencies generally are using water more efficiently and cutting back on waste

The scene captured on video by a onetime aspiring filmmaker had neither actors nor dialogue, but it spoke volumes:

A stream of water from a leaking sprinkler pooled on the ground, creating a miniature marsh. Above the glistening pond, silver block letters on the building in the backdrop spelled out: "Department of Water and Power, City of Los Angeles, Receiving Station K."

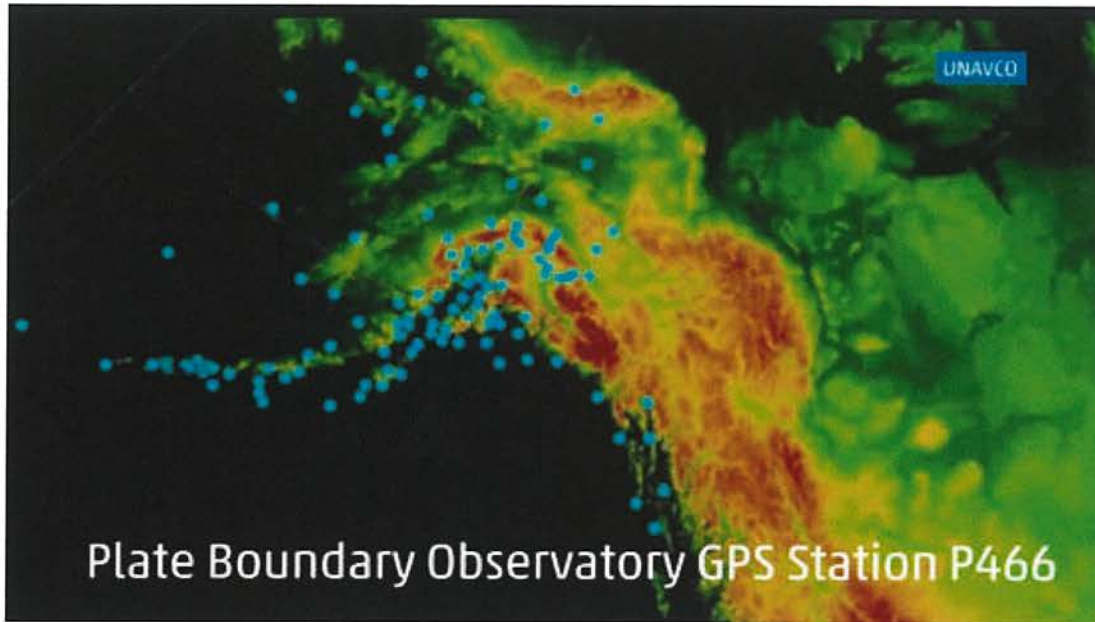
To Matt Chapman, who gave up his film dreams for a software engineer's more reliable paycheck, it was a case of hypocrisy worth documenting on YouTube. And he's not the only one scrutinizing how public agencies use water.



Scientists from UC Berkeley say preliminary data show the trees are stressed and having to work harder to hydrate



Eight-two percent of California is experiencing extreme drought and farmers in California's Central Valley are looking for water elsewhere- underground.



With the drought in California still going strong, parts of the state are actually being lifted!



California's record drought is hurting honey supplies and raising prices for consumers.



Are desalination plants the future of water in drought-stricken California?

As officials crack down on homeowners who waste water, more drought-conscious Californians are using social media to broadcast video of what appear to be government agencies breaking their own water-use rules: sprinklers running at city parks in the middle of the day, public workers hosing grass until it becomes a muddy mess. They are also filing an increasing number of complaints about wasteful water use by their neighbors and on city property.

"Whether it's a violation or not is kind of a technicality. The point is they were very clearly wasting water," Chapman said of the leaking DWP sprinkler. "If they're trying to hold citizens responsible financially for wasting water on their homes, then certainly I hope somebody is being held responsible at the DWP for wasting water like that."

The state loses about 10% of its supplied water volume — billions of gallons a year — to leaking pipes alone, according to a 2009 study by Southern California Edison. A pipe rupture that flooded UCLA earlier this year resulted in the loss of more than 20 million gallons. A water main break in West Hollywood on Friday spewed as much as 9,600 gallons of water a minute.

Officials say their agencies generally are using water more efficiently and cutting back on waste. But they acknowledge that sprinklers sometimes break, watering systems get reset and managing water use at massive public departments isn't always easy.

"Everybody has to follow the same rules," said Penny Falcon, the DWP's water conservation policy manager. "But there are special cases on some of those rules both with the state ordinance and with ours."

Public agencies have been more carefully monitoring water use since Gov. Jerry Brown proclaimed a drought emergency in January and the state water board adopted conservation regulations in July. This month, Brown signed legislation requiring

agencies to quantify and report system water loss in future urban water management plans.

A spokesman for Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said he plans to issue an executive order within the next week that will impose even stricter limits on city departments' water use.



A firefighter walks up North Olive Drive toward Sunset Boulevard after a water main break in West Hollywood. Public agencies have been more carefully monitoring water use since Gov. Jerry Brown proclaimed a drought emergency in January. (Emily Rhyne / Los Angeles Times)

For many Californians who have been dutifully abiding by increasingly strict limitations on their home water use — even replacing much-loved grassy lawns with expensive drought-tolerant landscaping — the tighter rules for government agencies simply make sense.

Local water districts have tightened ordinances throughout the summer to reduce residential water use and to help achieve Brown's goal of reducing use by 20% statewide. DWP customers, for instance, may water only on certain days of the week and at certain times of the day.

Manny Fernandez, a 32-year-old project manager from Northridge, said he waters only on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays as prescribed. So when he drove past Ritchie Valens Park in Pacoima on a recent Saturday and saw sprinklers dousing an expanse of dirt in the middle of the afternoon, he was "so appalled" he pulled over to snap a [picture](#).

"We're following directions; we're doing everything we can to help the state and avoid high bills," Fernandez said. "As a consumer, I just felt like it was a slap in the face."

The park has been closed for construction while workers install a water-saving irrigation system, said Ramon Barajas, an assistant general manager for the Department of Recreation and Parks. Air quality rules allow water use to dampen an area so that contractors don't create a dust bowl, he said. Officials are installing signs to let neighbors know that.

Since the 2006-07 fiscal year ended, the department has saved more than 2 billion gallons by using reclaimed water at parks and golf courses, replacing grass with synthetic fields and adopting other measures, Barajas said.

Whether it's a violation or not is kind of a technicality. The point is they were very clearly wasting water.- Matt Chapman, about a leaking DWP sprinkler

"We have gone the extra mile to comply with the ordinance without sprinkling in the daytime," said Tom Gibson, a department landscape architect. "There are certain instances we have to, and every once in a while there may be a broken valve or something. Sometimes the public does see that before we do."

In general, the city's 400-plus parks are supposed to abide by the DWP's standard watering schedule, Barajas said. The less water they use, the more taxpayer money can be reallocate elsewhere.

Current rules allow watering of sports fields outside of prescribed times if facility managers reduce their overall use by at least 20% and obtain a variance from the DWP.

Golf courses and other large landscapes can deviate from the department's schedule if managers cut water use by 20%, but they must also install weather-based irrigation controllers and use available recycled water.

Michelle Vargas, a DWP spokeswoman, said the agency does not track complaints specifically about government agencies. But because of increased consciousness about water conservation, she said, the agency has received many more complaints in recent months. In 2013, Vargas said, the department received 375 complaints. This year, it has already received more than 4,000.

A recent review by the agency found that its conservation efforts have reduced usage nearly 30% over five years. Since 2009, the DWP has replaced more than 2,818 fixtures at water and power facilities, which it says contributed to a saving of more than 120 million gallons of water over five years.

The Department of Recreation and Parks has received fewer than 20 formal waste complaints in the last month, Gibson said. Such complaints are filed with the DWP and passed to Gibson, who funnels them to the appropriate maintenance team. Even that small number of complaints represented a 30% spike from previous months, officials said.

Most of the complaints involved damaged equipment such as a leaking or broken sprinkler or broken valves, Gibson said. Sometimes vandals steal sprinkler heads, which can cause flooding.

If the DWP receives a complaint about a public agency, members of the Conservation Response Team determine whether there was a violation and then contact the agency in question, Falcon said. Like residential customers, agencies almost always want to fix the problem, she said.

In the case of the DWP's sprinkler leak, the department used YouTube's comments section to thank Chapman, and it pledged to fix it. Days later, Chapman returned to the building and saw that the department had kept its promise.

"I don't think we're going to fine ourselves," Falcon said. "That would be a lot of administrative paperwork for nothing."

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Judge rules delinquents must pay water bills in bankrupt Detroit



Customers wait outside the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department's Westside Customer Service Center in Detroit on Aug. 25, 2014. (Robin Buckson / Associated Press)

By MICHAEL MUSKAL
LA TIMES 9/30/2014

Judge rules he lacks standing to prevent Detroit from shutting off water to thousands

A federal judge on Monday told thousands of Detroit residents that they must pay their delinquent bills or face having their water shut off because the bankrupt city needs the money.

After two days of hearings, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes rejected a request for a new moratorium on enforcing the shut-off orders.

Advocates for those who could lose their water said they intend to appeal.



Detroit's mayor unveiled a 10-point plan Thursday that aims to allow the city to collect on overdue water bills while making it easier for customers to make payments, enter into payment arrangements and access financial assistance after months of controversial water shutoffs in the city. (Maya Srikrishnan)

Rhodes is the federal judge who has been dealing with the long-running bankruptcy proceedings involving the city, which is seeking help under Chapter 9 of the bankruptcy law to reorganize its finances.

"Chapter 9 strictly limits the courts' power in a bankruptcy case," Rhodes said as he read a ruling Monday morning, according to local media reports.

The judge acknowledged that the lack of water would create problems for residents, but added that he did not have authority to force the city to keep the water flowing.

"The last thing [Detroit] needs is this hit to its revenues," the judge also said.

In July 2013, Detroit sought bankruptcy protection in what became the largest such municipal proceeding in U.S. history.

The water issue has become the symbol of the dire service cuts the city was prepared to impose on its residents to get its head back above water.

The city estimated that at the peak of the problem, 150,000 customers were delinquent in their water payments.

Among the techniques it employed was to extended customer service hours and establishing a plan to get charitable institutions to pay some of the bills.

The city also allowed some customers to pay only 10%, down from 30% in some cases, of the balances to help clear its financial books.

Currently 25,000 customers are enrolled in a water payment plan, up from 17,000 earlier. The city announced recently that it had shut off water to about 24,000 customers this year and was adding about 400 a day.

The judge's ruling leaves thousands of people at risk of losing their water.

"No one ever said the water had to be free," Alice Jennings, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs who sought the most recent moratorium, told reporters after Rhodes' ruling.

She said she was disappointed and would seek an appeal. "Our position is the water had to be affordable. We're still looking for affordable water."

Rhodes also noted that Detroit and Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties are in the process of approving a new Great Lakes Water Authority under which Detroit would maintain ownership of the region's infrastructure but would lease the pipes to the suburbs for \$50 million a year.

The move is designed to bring in cash for repairs to the aging systems.

Study: Sand mining for fracking has risks

By Neela Banerjee

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON— As a domestic energy boom driven by hydraulic fracturing spreads, so could stripmining for sand needed for the controversial production process, introducing risks to water, air, public health and property values, according to a report issued Thursday.

Sand mining has exploded across the bluffs and farmland of western Wisconsin, touching off a groundswell of resistance from the region's small towns that seek to better control the process and its effect. The demand for sand could open up areas of a dozen other states to sand mining too, from Maine to Iowa, including northern Illinois, according to the report.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves high-pressure injection of millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals and sand into geological formations to unlock oil and gas trapped there. The sand props open the fissures created by the fracturing process and is porous enough to let oil and gas pass through and go up the well.

Produced by the Civil Society Institute, based in Boston, the Environmental Working Group and Midwest Environmental Advocates, the report is based on state and local information, mostly from Wisconsin and Minnesota, peer-reviewed research and interviews with residents who live near mines. There are 164 working sand mines and related facilities in the two states, with 20 more on the drawing board, said Grant Smith, one of the authors.

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Across the state

MAMMOTH LAKES

Water pressure leads to 600 quakes

A seismologist says a series of more than 600 earthquakes during a 24-hour period in the Mammoth Lakes region may have been caused by water pressure from area hot springs.

The Los Angeles Times reports Saturday that U.S. Geological Survey seismologist David Shelly says scientists don't believe the earthquake swarm is connected to any volcanic activity.

Shelly says the quakes may have been triggered as water pressure from area hot springs shifted through the ground surface, stressing tectonic plates

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No Drugs Down the Drain!

Protect our water – Dispose of drugs properly

National Take-Back Day

Saturday, September 27 10 AM - 2 PM

at

Lost Hills Sheriff Station

27050 Agoura Road, Agoura

Ventura County Sheriff Station

2101 E. Olsen Rd, Thousand Oaks

Unused or expired drugs pollute the environment when they are flushed down the drain. Everyone should use pharmaceuticals as directed, but if you have unused or expired prescription drugs, they must be disposed of properly.





The best way to control water pollution is to prevent it in the first place. For more information visit: www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org.




LEAK

The official California
four-letter word

Find and fix leaks because
Californians Don't Waste 


www.LVMWD.com

Save Our WATER 
saveourh2o.org

LV Enterprise

9/25/2014

Storage Tank Lawsuit Pulled by Plaintiff

Litigation by a Westlake Village homeowner seeking to stop construction of a 5-million gallon storage tank at Las Virgenes Reservoir has been dismissed at the request of the plaintiff. As part of the settlement agreement, the defendants, including Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD), AECOM Technical Services, Inc. and Pacific Hydrotech Corporation agreed not to pursue reimbursement for certain costs they incurred defending the suit. The District's reimbursable costs were approximately \$1,000; however, overall costs were just over \$90,000. David W. Pedersen, LVMWD's General Manager said that work has continued on the tank project which is targeted for completion by June 2015. He added, "In the months prior to construction, there were concerns circulating in the community on several aspects of the project. We have made every effort to be sensitive and responsive to those issues. To date, we have concluded nearly half of the work, including blasting, in a closely controlled and safe manner, consistent with the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding we reached with the City of Westlake Village. As we now focus on building the walls and roof of the tank, we will continue to work closely with residents to minimize the occasional traffic inconveniences during construction and to complete the project as quickly as possible."

LV Enterprise

9/25/2014