

Residents Asked to Cut Water Usage

By Evan Ortega

Because of immediate and long-term water shortages, Manhattan Beach residents are going to have cut their water use by 10 percent starting July or face higher water rates next year, local officials say.

The City of Manhattan Beach began enforcing its new water conservation ordinance last week. It orders water use restrictions for five different drought stages, as declared by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The District declared a Stage 2 water shortage last Thursday, which is intended to cut water use by 10 percent. “I think we’ve built in a pretty extensive set of permanent behaviors for residents to follow and it will all be in place even after the Stage Two restrictions are called off,” City Environmental Programs Manager Sona Kalapura said. “A lot of it is changing the way we behave every day in life, I think it’s definitely doable.”

Under the new Stage 2 restrictions, residents can no longer use their sprinklers unless those are controlled by a timer, and landscape watering must be limited to Wednesday and Saturday evenings after 6 p.m. “With the Stage 2 drought requirements, they’re asking for a 10 percent reduction in water use,” Kalapura said. “We’ve been in a drought for a long time.”

The new ordinance’s prohibitions include: daytime landscape watering, washing driveways and walkways without the use of a water broom, operating fountains or sprinklers during strong winds and filling spas or swimming pools without covers. The ordinance also mandates that beginning in five years, non-residential buildings must install low-flow toilets and water efficient dishwashers, and replace old washing machines with water-efficient models. Also, restaurants can no longer serve water to customers unless the latter request it.

The Manhattan Beach City Council discussed the ordinance with members the Environmental Task Force’s Water and Storm Water Sub-Committee, who helped draft the measure. Council members unanimously voted to adopt the ordinance in June. “I’m very pleased that the City of Manhattan Beach is taking an aggressive approach to water conservation,” said Councilmember Mitch

Ward at the time. “We have to do whatever we can to save this resource...I’m pleased with this effort and I think the educational aspects of it will go a long way.”

Carol Kwan represents Manhattan Beach and other South Bay cities as a board member of the West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin), which wholesales water from the MWD. She said Southern California gets its water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in Northern California, and the Colorado River Aqueduct. “Whenever we conserve or recycle water it means less water that we need to import,” Kwan said.

West Basin spokesperson Ron Wildermuth noted that aging infrastructure and long periods of drought have threatened both water sources. “The levy system in the Delta is really fragile,” he said. “If there was an earthquake that damaged it, it could cut off the water supply to California for up to two years.”

Wildermuth said Southern California has increasingly relied on the Colorado River Aqueduct after a federal judge limited the amount of water that could be imported from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. He added that the ruling was intended to protect an endangered fish--the delta smelt--from getting destroyed in water pumps. “That limits our pumping somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of the time,” Wildermuth said. “There may be times when we have water in Northern California, but we can’t move it south.”

Kwan explained that though she loves the environment and cares about endangered species, she also wants to maintain a stable supply of water. “It’s a balance, but our water supply affects our economy and livelihood,” she said. “We do have to keep the water coming. We cannot shut off the water, because so many people’s livelihoods depend on it.”

According to Wildermuth, because most residents use their water outdoors, Manhattan Beach’s drought restrictions should be effective in cutting water use by 10 percent over the next year. “The best way to reduce water consumption is to reduce outdoor water use,” he said. “There’s a huge education component to this. We don’t want residents to be frightened; we want them to be educated...I

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