How to reach us

If you have questions, comments or would like more information on water issues, please contact us or visit our web site.

TEL: (831) 475-8500
FAX: (831) 475-4291
EMAIL: custserv@soquelcreekwater.org
MAIL TO: P.O. Box 158
Soquel, CA 95073-0158
WEB SITE: www.SoquelCreekWater.org
www.WaterSavingTips.org

Soquel Creek Water District is a nonprofit, local government agency with a locally elected Board of Directors. The District provides water supply and water resource management to more than 45,000 customers within a 17-square mile area of mid-Santa Cruz County.

The Board of Directors meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00PM at the District's office at 5180 Soquel Drive. Meetings are open to everyone and comments from the public are heard at each meeting.

What's on Tap is an in-house publication for the customers of the District. Forward your comments to the editor at the address above.

Christopher J. Regan, *Editor*

SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

What's in the Water?

Answers to questions about water quality.

What's in the Water is a regular feature in *What's on Tap* that gives you information about the District's water supply. In this issue we look at "turbidity."

What is Turbidity?

Turbidity is caused by particles suspended in water. These particles scatter or reflect light rays, making the water appear cloudy. Turbidity in water is caused by suspended matter such as clay, silt, finely divided organic and inorganic matter, and other microscopic organisms.

What are the District's turbidity levels?

Turbidity levels range from 0.20 to 1.1 units in the District's distribution system. The average turbidity level for 2002 was 0.34 units. The USEPA National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations set 5 units as the maximum contaminant level for public water systems.

What are the health effects?

According to the California Department of Health Services, turbidity has no health effects. However, high levels of turbidity can interfere with disinfection and provide a medium for microbial growth. Turbidity may indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms. These organisms include bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, and associated headaches.

What's ON TAP
At the Soquel Creek Water District

Volume 5, No. 5 *Printed on Recycled Paper* *September/October 2003*

New policy requires retrofits for water

Board of Directors adopts water demand offset program for new development

A new policy, adopted by the District's Board of Directors on August 5, is making it easier for District customers to retrofit their property with low-flow fixtures, free-of-charge.

The new Water Demand Offset Policy requires applicants for new water service to purchase and install sufficient numbers of shower heads, faucet aerators, and low-flow toilets to save 1.2 times the amount of water they expect to use in their new development so that there is a "zero impact" on the District's water supply.

To do this, applicants for new service will have to replace (retrofit) water guzzling fixtures in homes and businesses in the District's service area with low-flow fixtures.

What does this mean to you?

District customers can take advantage of the program by contacting the District and asking to be placed on a list of property owners desiring the free retrofits. Retrofits are completed on a first-come, first-served basis and as new applicants requesting water service work towards meeting their retrofit requirement.

Property owners taking advantage of the program:

• Must first have a Water Use Efficiency Survey conducted on their property to determine what fixtures need to be retrofitted. The survey is free and can be scheduled by contacting the District at (831) 475-8501, ext. 146.

• Are responsible for any structural issues (such as subflooring on toilet replacement).

• Are responsible for the cost difference exceeding the price of the toilet selected from the District's recommended toilet list, if requesting certain aesthetic upgrades (such as color, style, etc.).

The District, which has identified that it is currently overpumping its groundwater supply, is the first in the county to establish a "water demand offset" policy.

For more information or questions about the policy, contact the District at (831) 475-8500.

Making sure water is there when you need it

Assuring a long-term dependable supply.

The District is launching the final phase of a multi-year planning process to assure a long-term dependable supply of water for our customers and protect our community's coastal groundwater basin.

District customers receive water from only one source—local groundwater aquifers. Our greatest threat to a dependable long-term supply is intrusion of seawater.

Years of study have defined a "sustainable" level of groundwater pumping—essentially the amount of water the aquifers can supply each year while still preventing seawater intrusion. When we exceeded that point in the mid-1980s, we enhanced our groundwater management efforts to restore groundwater levels along the coast in order to maintain the barrier against seawater. We also began in earnest to identify and plan for long-term supply needs and to promote conservation.

Even with our successful conservation program, the planning process clearly demonstrated that we must also secure alternative supplies to supplement our groundwater production in order to meet our customers' needs now and in the future—while also maintaining aquifer levels that prevent saltwater intrusion.

Currently, annual customer needs exceed the sustainable groundwater yield by approximately 600 acre-feet per year. *(One acre-foot of water = 325,000 gallons or the annual water supply for 3 average families.)* Even with the significant savings to date by our customers and more anticipated for the future, conservation alone cannot solve today's problem or enable us to reliably meet future water needs.

Best estimates are that a new water supply producing 1,500 - 2,000 acre-feet per year will be needed both to restore healthy aquifers that prohibit saltwater intrusion and respond to current land use policies anticipating only minimal growth of less than 1 percent per year over the next 30-40 years.

A SPECIAL UPDATE ON WATER SUPPLY PLANNING

What are our water supply options?

After investigating numerous possible projects over several years, the District's Board of Directors has narrowed the list to five options to be evaluated further:

- Soquel Creek diversion would take water during winter months when flows are above in-stream fish flow requirements then treat and deliver to District customers or store in the ground for later use.

- Regional seawater desalination with the City of Santa Cruz would provide water to the District during normal precipitation years and be used by the City of Santa Cruz during drought years.

- Recycled water—groundwater enhancement with the City of Watsonville and Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency would have the District help fund the 4,000 acre-foot per year wastewater recycling project for agricultural irrigation in lieu of coastal groundwater pumping. In exchange, Watsonville would increase its total production by up to 2,000 acre-feet per year to sell water to the District.

- Local water reclamation—Satellite recycling plants would divert and treat some of the wastewater within the District for irrigation uses.

- Recharge enhancement with precipitation—Groundwater recharge would be enhanced by capturing and directing rainfall into groundwater recharge zones through various collector and percolation systems.

Meeting future supply

The District's approach to meeting future supply needs includes:

1. Maintaining and expanding the groundwater management and monitoring program.
2. Continuing to expand the District's conservation program.
3. Securing a supplemental water supply.

What's ahead?

Much remains to be done. The District's Board of Directors has selected the supply alternatives, detailed in the box on the left, for the District staff and consulting team to further develop the details needed to compare and evaluate these options. Before the end of the year, that procedure will identify a best overall project option, which will then be analyzed under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. The entire process will include further public review sessions and opportunities for commenting. We want your input!

Stay in touch and informed

The Soquel Creek Water District is committed to providing the information you desire on the topics that influence our future water supply. We encourage your comments and questions now and throughout the process to select the best alternative for meeting our water supply needs. Please write the District at 5180 Soquel Drive, Soquel, 95073 or email custserv@soquelcreekwater.org.