



CITY NOTES

July 24, 2014

STATUS REPORT ON FORT BRAGG'S WATER SUPPLY

Fort Bragg's water supply is highly vulnerable to drought-related shortages. Fort Bragg's water supply comes solely from three surface water sources. We have no groundwater wells. Unlike most communities in California which are reliant on surface water, Fort Bragg has no seasonal water storage. Although we are in the permitting process for construction of a small reservoir at the end of Summers Lane, it will not be available to help address summer peak water demands until 2016 at the earliest. Fort Bragg relies entirely on effective water management and conservation to ensure sufficient water supply to meet its customers' needs.

The 2013-14 "water year" (i.e., from October 1 through September 30) is shaping up to be one of the driest years on record. According to National Weather Service data, Fort Bragg has received 22.21 inches of rain to date, which is about half of the average annual precipitation. At this time last year, Fort Bragg's rainfall totaled 32.63 inches (80% of normal); and in 2012 it was 36.45 (90% of normal). As we approach the peak of summer after three consecutive years of below average rainfall, City staff is very closely monitoring our water situation.

The Noyo River diversion, which is the City's primary water source, is currently flowing at about 3.4 cubic feet per second (cfs). Average flows for this time of year, based on 62 years of data at the Noyo River gaging station, are typically 12 cfs. When flows drop below 3 cfs in the Noyo, the City is only permitted to divert water when tides are above 2 feet in height. The reduced flows restrict the times during which we can pump and also require us to pump at lower volumes. The combination of lower pumping rates and shorter pumping times reduces the amount of water available from the Noyo source. We expect to be on the restricted pumping regimen by the end of this week.

At this time, the City is able to produce sufficient water to meet daily demands for Fort Bragg customers. On an average winter day, City water customers use about 584,000 gallons per day (gpd). During summer weekends, our peak daily demand spikes up to more than 830,000 gpd. This is due primarily to increased consumption by motels and restaurants catering to the tourists who are so important to our local economy. According to Public Works Director Tom Varga, the City will likely need to declare a Water Emergency at some point in early- to mid-August. At that time, a whole host of water conservation measure will be required for both residential and commercial customers.

In the meantime, last week the State Water Resources Control Board imposed mandatory statewide conservation measures which focus on outdoor water use. Irrigation of landscaping is limited to two days a week and sprinklers must be focused on landscaped areas so as to avoid runoff onto paved areas. If you wash your car with a hose, it must be equipped with a cut-off nozzle to conserve water. The City is modifying irrigation at its public facilities to comply with these requirements and we will be talking with the School District about reducing irrigation at the Middle School fields (the other playing fields use untreated groundwater).

The City will be releasing further information in the coming weeks about the need for water conservation and identifying ways in which customers can reduce their water consumption.

City Notes is published on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the column, feel free to contact City Manager Linda Ruffing at (707) 961-2823, ext. 118 or L.Ruffing@fortbragg.com.