



## Why So High?

### Reasons and Remedies for an Unusually High Water Bill

Water and money are both precious resources. Armed with information, you will be better prepared to conserve both.

**S**urprise: You open your San Dieguito Water District (SDWD) bi-monthly bill and it is much higher than usual. What happened?

Most likely, there is a simple explanation and an easy resolution. There are several common causes for an unusually high water bill.

#### Possible Reasons

##### You used more water than usual.

High water usage is the most common cause of a higher bill. Perhaps you had house guests, refilled a swimming pool, or installed new landscaping that required watering. Maybe your child moved home during college break. Perhaps our area experienced an extended hot spell.



SDWD is responsible for the meter up to the customer side. If your meter has a customer-side shut-off valve, you can access it to turn off water in case of emergencies or repairs. After you turn the valve, check the leak dial to make sure the valve is operating properly.

##### You have a leak on your property.

Indoor leaks (toilets are often the culprit) or outdoor leaks (often irrigation systems) are common problems. Even a seemingly small leak, left unchecked for a period of time, can result in a huge waste of water and corresponding increase in your bill.

To check for a non-irrigation leak, turn off all water-using appliances and fixtures to ensure no water is being used anywhere in the house. Then locate your water meter, which is usually by the street or an alley. Slowly remove the lid, watching out for harmful insects or pests. Observe the leak indicator for movement for several minutes. If the dial moves, that means water is moving through the meter even though all appliances and fixtures are turned off, indicating a leak

To find an irrigation system leak, check for puddles of water or soggy ground. Turn on the irrigation system, one valve at a time, to check for broken or misaligned heads. For more information, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoor/watering\\_tips.html](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoor/watering_tips.html).

##### A reading error occurred.

The District has several layers of validation to ensure that meters are read and bills are calculated correctly. While very rare, errors are possible. Check the consumption on your current bill against the consumption over the same billing period one year ago to see if it is fairly consistent. Also check the read on the bill against the current read on the meter. If the bill shows a reading lower than the current read on your meter, your bill is correct.

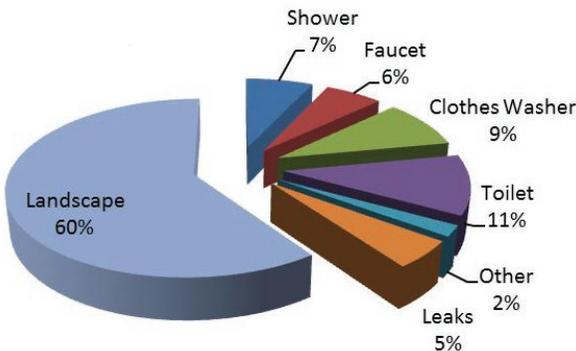
##### Leak indicator



somewhere in the system. Check hose connections, faucets and toilets for water leaks. If none of these is the cause and the dial continues to turn, you may have a hidden leak in an underground pipe. Turning off your shut-off valve to the house (usually located near the garage) will help you isolate whether a leak is indoors or outdoors. If indoors, you may need to call a plumber for assistance. If you suspect an outdoor leak between the meter and your house, you may need to call a leak detection service to find the precise location.

##### We're Here to Help

If you cannot determine the reason for an unusually high water bill, please call (760) 633-2658 and our friendly customer service staff will assist you. If you have determined the reason and would like tips on lowering your water bill, visit [www.sdwd.org/conserve](http://www.sdwd.org/conserve). Water and money are both precious resources. Armed with information, you will be better prepared to conserve both.



Typical water use in a single family home.

Some information in this article is based on a City of San Diego Public Utilities brochure.

# Drought Report: Winter 2015

First, the good news: SDWD customers are doing an awesome job of conserving water! More good news: recent storms regionally and statewide have provided a welcome break to the continuing drought and have made a small dent in long-existing dry conditions throughout California.

Now the sobering news: Despite the recent snow and rainfall, we remain in a state of drought. In fact, SDWD is still in the Drought Level 2 Condition enacted on August 20, 2014, with mandatory water-use restrictions in effect, as detailed at [www.sdwd.org/drought](http://www.sdwd.org/drought). This condition is in response to emergency regulations declared in July 2014 by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).

## An Overwhelmingly Positive Customer Response

Since the region's last drought in 2008-2011, SDWD customers have done a wonderful job of reducing consumption and keeping it low compared to pre-drought usage. Numbers tell the story: from July-November 2014, District water purchases were down 18.7% compared to the same period in 2007.

Your efforts are appreciated. Nevertheless, the District is currently responding to statewide drought conditions, with an expectation from the SWRCB to reduce consumption from 2013 levels.

From July-November 2014, District water purchases were up 2.8% compared to the same period in 2013. Regionally, the San



Northern California's Lake Oroville is a critical part of the State Water Project, one of San Diego County's main sources of supply. Drought conditions have significantly lowered storage in reservoirs statewide.

Photo courtesy of the Department of Water Resources.

Diego County Water Authority reported a 1.6% increase in water deliveries in the same period, compared to the prior year.

What happened? While the District and regional agencies have continued to spread the word regarding the drought and the importance of water conservation, water consumption increased as a result of extraordinarily warm and dry temperatures during the summer and fall months. In November 2014, for example, the average daily temperature at Lindbergh Field was 5.3 degrees warmer than the historical average. Mother Nature does not always make it easy for us to save water.

## Welcomed Precipitation, But We're Not Yet Out of Drought

December 2014 was a stormy month. The precipitation was welcomed, but it is not sufficient to declare California out of drought.

Statewide, through December 31, 2014, the Northern Sierra 8-Station Index reported cumulative precipitation of 22.8 inches since the official beginning of the rainy season on October 1, 2014. This figure is 129% of average precipitation through this date. The Index is a crucial barometer of drought conditions, as the Northern Sierra snowpack is immensely important in supplying water to reservoirs in the State Water Project (which partially supplies our region).

However, as evidenced in previous years, just because a rainy season starts strong does not mean it will finish with similar potency. As recently as 2012-2013, the Index began the rainy season well above average through February, but ended 5.7 inches

below average. To make a substantial dent in drought conditions, we need continued above-average rainfall over a long period of time and a heavy Sierra snowpack, which as history has shown, is no guarantee.

If conditions do not improve significantly, the region may be faced with water allocations from our largest wholesale supplier, Metropolitan Water District. If allocations are enacted at the District level, they could lead to further water-use restrictions as well as potential drought rates and meter restrictions. We hope these worsening circumstances do not come to pass, but we need to be prepared.

## SDWD Wants to Keep You Informed and Aware

Our customers have made great strides in conserving water indoors and out. We greatly appreciate the new water-wise habits that you have made part of your daily life.

Of course, there is always more to do during these challenging times. For ideas, programs and rebates to help you save water, visit [www.sdwd.org/conserves](http://www.sdwd.org/conserves). For up-to-date drought information, visit [www.sdwd.org/drought](http://www.sdwd.org/drought).

During the drought, SDWD provides a monthly drought update to the District Board of Directors on the third Wednesday of every month. For the latest drought information, tune in to our Board meetings at 5:00 pm at [www.encinitasca.gov](http://www.encinitasca.gov) or attend in person.

We thank you for your continuing enthusiastic cooperation. From our District family to yours: Have a wonderful and fulfilling 2015!

Mother Nature  
does not always  
make it easy for us  
to save water, but  
we all must do our  
part during these  
challenging times.  
We thank you for  
your continuing  
enthusiastic  
cooperation.

## Water, Water Everywhere

“Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.”

The above verse comes from a poem entitled “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” published by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798. The ballad tells the story of sailors who paradoxically find themselves in the middle of an ocean of water, yet without any potable water to drink.

This paradox also could apply to people like us who live in Encinitas, close to bodies of water, yet with a limited supply of water to drink and use in our daily activities.

The Puzzle Word List contains many places where water can be found in San Diego County. Can you think of any other places, here or around the world, where other forms of water may be located? (Hint: glaciers in Alaska.)

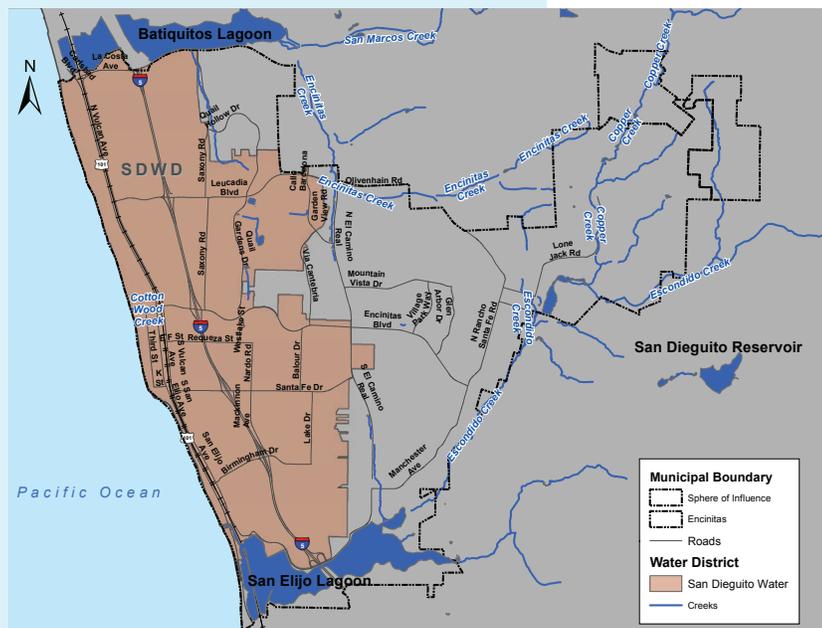
Wherever on Earth water exists, people plants and animals need to share it to survive. That is why we all should work hard to conserve it. We know you are a good water conservationist – thanks!

## Water Word Challenge

This puzzle is designed for students in grades 5-8. First, read the story. Then draw a box around each puzzle word. Words can be formed up to down, down to up, left to right or right to left.

Email your completed puzzle to [conserve@sdwd.org](mailto:conserve@sdwd.org) or mail it to SDWD Water Conservation, 160 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas, CA 92024 to win a prize. Make sure you include your name and address. Good luck and have fun!

E	X	K	R	I	I	W	A	W	D	I	K	D	I	A
L	H	N	H	I	K	B	Q	W	G	R	I	D	W	W
I	H	J	H	P	V	C	Y	B	K	C	U	U	X	M
F	Z	Q	I	A	R	E	C	T	E	Z	V	O	G	A
E	P	L	L	U	R	A	R	L	S	N	W	L	S	N
G	A	A	Y	U	C	B	I	N	U	A	Q	C	F	L
G	K	G	S	J	X	K	O	N	D	E	V	F	O	N
E	V	O	O	G	Q	W	O	R	N	C	K	O	G	E
Q	P	O	H	H	G	C	X	B	O	O	P	T	A	Q
R	I	N	M	J	S	K	N	V	P	D	S	E	D	T
S	R	P	A	T	F	E	L	L	E	W	V	P	X	H
Y	O	Y	E	D	X	E	R	U	N	O	F	F	L	C
E	P	O	R	C	B	R	G	M	C	Q	B	A	Y	C
R	A	E	T	W	Y	C	J	S	P	R	I	N	G	B
X	V	P	S	J	G	Q	T	O	Z	V	H	P	D	C



### Puzzle Word List

- |        |        |
|--------|--------|
| BAY    | RAIN   |
| HARBOR | STREAM |
| POND   | CREEK  |
| SNOW   | LAKE   |
| CLOUD  | RIVER  |
| ICE    | VAPOR  |
| POOL   | FOG    |
| SPRING | OCEAN  |
| COVE   | RUNOFF |
| LAGOON | WELL   |

# Upcoming Conservation Programs

Conserving water can be beautiful, easy, and fun! Here are some workshops and activities occurring over the next few months. You'll learn new skills, meet your neighbors, and have a great time.

Register for the workshops at [conserve@sdwd.org](mailto:conserve@sdwd.org). Visit [www.sdwd.org/conserve](http://www.sdwd.org/conserve) for details on these and more events and opportunities.

## Water-Smart Professional Landscape

**Maintenance Workshop Series**, February 4, 11, 18, 25; 5-7 pm. This four-session workshop trains professional maintenance staff in water-efficient plant care and irrigation. The workshop is offered in English with materials available in English or Spanish. Participants who complete the sessions will receive a certificate. Registration is required.



## California-Friendly Landscape Training

March 7; 9 am-Noon. This comprehensive workshop offers solutions to common landscape problems. Residents learn how to design landscapes that are sustainable in our climate. Topics include how to choose the best plants for your yard and irrigate efficiently. Registration is required.

**Fix-a-Leak Week**, March 16; 12:30-2:30 pm. This hands-on workshop instructed by professionals teaches simple indoor plumbing repair and outdoor irrigation troubleshooting.

March 16-22, 2015  
**Fix a Leak Week**



**Life After Lawns**, March 21; 9 am-Noon. Book author and professional landscape designer Bill Schnetz will provide a step-by-step approach for transforming a boring, thirsty lawn into a dazzling, water-saving garden paradise. He also will sell/sign books. Register at [conserve@sdwd.org](mailto:conserve@sdwd.org).

**California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Tour**, March 28-29; 9:30 am – 4:30 pm. SDWD is proud to be a sponsor of this event. [gardennative.org/](http://gardennative.org/)

**Encinitas Annual Garden Festival and Tour**, April 18; Time TBD. Tour tickets can be purchased at [encinitasgardenfestival.org](http://encinitasgardenfestival.org). Stop by our conservation booth for information and giveaways.



# Our CSR is on the Road to Serve

The newly created position of Customer Service Representative (CSR) has put the services of a seasoned and knowledgeable San Dieguito Water District employee at the forefront of customer-oriented activities. The CSR wears many hats and is on the move to serve you and the District. This position combined the duties previously performed by several other positions and allowed the District to reduce one position in the most recent budget, saving money and increasing efficiency.

In everything he does, the Customer Service Rep is here to serve!

All calls received through our Maintenance and Operations line and many calls to our Billing line are routed to the CSR for investigation. He determines what the issue is and what needs to be done to fix it. Sometimes it's as simple as calling a customer to resolve the issue. In other situations, the CSR will alert the Field Supervisor that a crew needs to be dispatched to make repairs.

Mondays get off to a busy start. The CSR drives a designated route bright and early each week to conduct customer meter readings. Each reading is transmitted from the customer's meter to the computer in the meter reading truck. The reads are then submitted to our Finance Technician, who creates a bill for each customer on the route.

## Dig Alerts and Drought Violations

The CSR is also a bit of an "artist." Have you noticed blue paint lines in front of someone's residential or commercial property?

Before homeowners or contractors can dig in the right-of-way, they contact DigAlert at 811. DigAlert notifies SDWD. The CSR verifies the location of water lines in that area and marks them out with temporary blue paint, ensuring that no water lines will be hit or broken during construction activities.

During our current drought, the CSR remains on high alert for any water waste he notices while traversing the community. When he sees a potential drought violation, he contacts the appropriate resident or business or leaves a courtesy door hanger to let them know there may be an issue.

In everything he does, the CSR is here to serve!



SDWD's CSR marks a water line.

# Connect with Us

- Visit our website at [www.sdwd.org](http://www.sdwd.org).
- Sign up for e-alerts at [encinitasca.gov](http://encinitasca.gov) for direct inbox delivery of *Currents* and other District publications.
- Like us on Facebook @ San Dieguito Water District.
- Have your water bill sent directly to your email. Enroll at [cashier@sdwd.org](mailto:cashier@sdwd.org).
- Have recurring payments automatically deducted from your credit card or checking account and view up to three years of consumption and billing history. Sign up at [www.sdwd.org](http://www.sdwd.org).
- Have you accomplished a water-wise project, small or large, by yourself or with a professional landscaper? If you'd like your beautifully smart renovation to be featured in a future publication, please email [conserve@sdwd.org](mailto:conserve@sdwd.org).



**San Dieguito Water District**  
160 Calle Magdalena  
Encinitas, CA 92024  
760-633-2650  
[www.sdwd.org](http://www.sdwd.org)  
[water@sdwd.org](mailto:water@sdwd.org)

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