



Water Police: Does Tattling on Your Neighbor Really Work?

City of Santa Cruz Water Department
November 13, 2014



Water Service Area

Areas served:

- Santa Cruz
- County
- Capitola

Population:

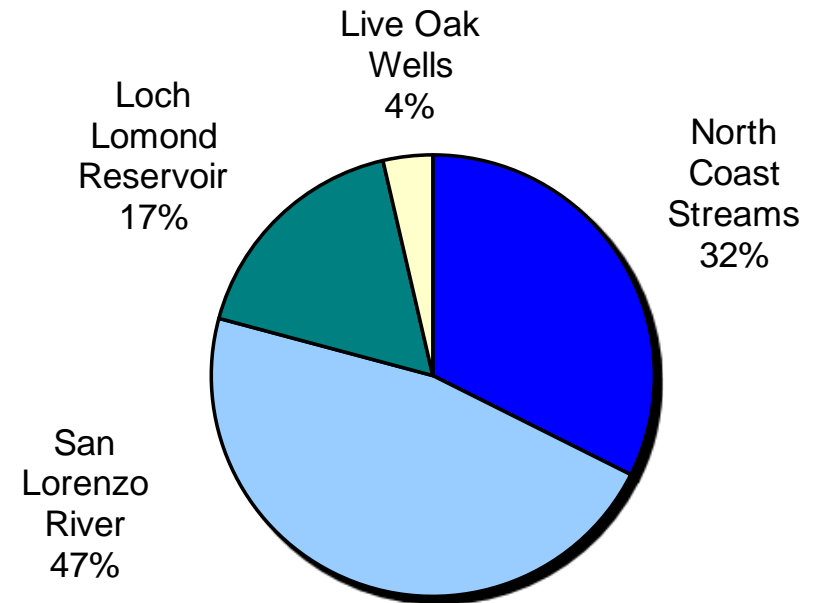
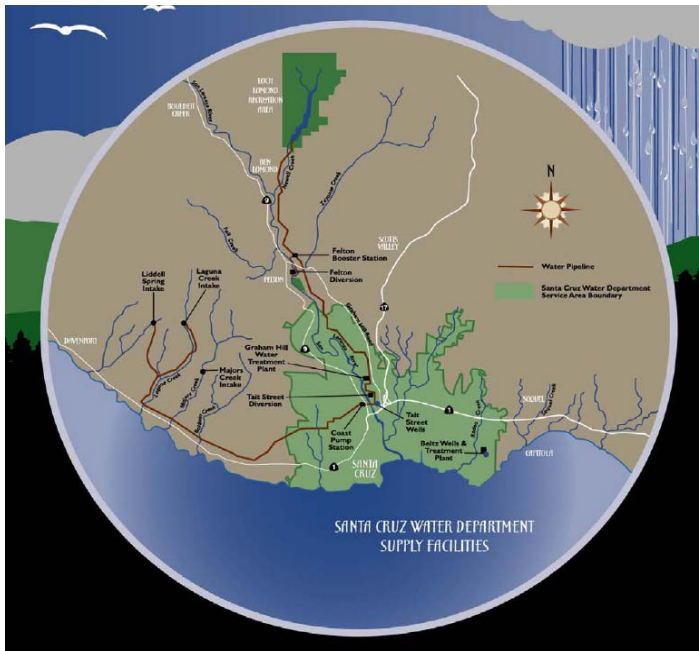
- 95,000

Governing body:

- City Council



Water Sources



North Coast Streams



San Lorenzo River



Loch Lomond Reservoir



Live Oak Wells



Water Waste Prevention

- Preventing waste or unreasonable use or unreasonable method of use is an important element in the overall management of water resources in California
- Ensure water supply is being put to maximum beneficial use
- **CUWCC - BMP 1.1 (new/existing users)**

Water Waste Prevention

- City of Santa Cruz has had an ongoing prohibition against water waste since the 1976-77 drought
- Regulation is always in effect, but under normal water conditions it is enforced mainly through education and outreach
- Violators subject to disconnection of water service

History Repeating Itself

OFFICE: NO. 18 PARK ST.

Irrigation and Sprinkling permitted only from 7 to 9 A. M.; and 4 to 7 P. M.

Water No. *1738* Santa Cruz, Cal., July 3, *1891*.

M L. C. and J. Vincent
No. *Past Cliff* Street.

TO George H. Sager, Lessee of Santa Cruz Water Works, DR.,

To *M Gals. Water in July, 1891;* \$ *1.00*

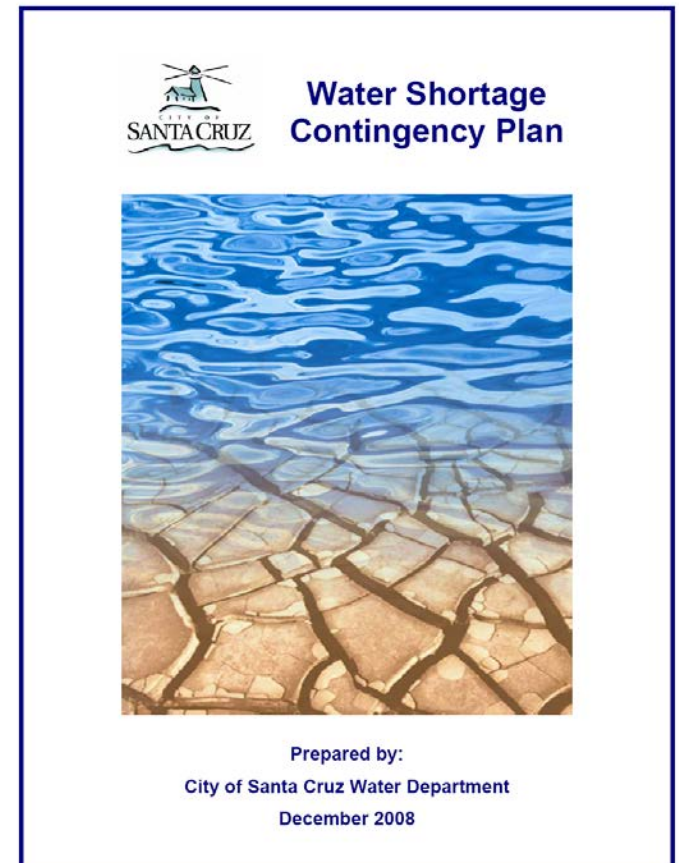
Arrears. - *11.00*

Total. - \$ *12.00*

Street Sprinkling and Waste of Water Strictly Prohibited. Paid

Water Shortage Contingency Plan

- Required of urban water suppliers by State of California
- Must address water shortages of up to 50 percent
- Water Department: comprehensive update in 2009

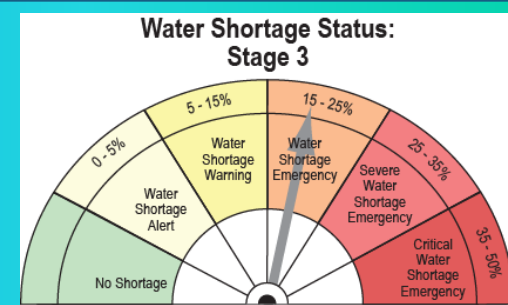


Five Stages to City's Plan

Stage	Magnitude of Water Shortage	Stage Title
1	0-5%	Water Shortage Alert
2	5-15%	Water Shortage Warning
3	15-25%	Water Shortage Emergency
4	25-35%	Severe Water Shortage Emergency
5	35-50%	Critical Water Shortage Emergency

Set of regulations that apply at each stage become increasingly stringent as the magnitude of the water shortage increases

Recent Experience



Year	Stage	Condition
2009	2	Warning
2012	1	Alert
2013	1	Alert
2014	3	Emergency

Outdoor Water Use Restrictions

- No landscape watering 10 am - 5 pm
- **No excessive landscape irrigation**
- Hose nozzles required
- No washing down hard/paved surfaces
- Washing buildings/structures prohibited
- No initial filling or draining/filling swimming pools & outdoor spas
- Plumbing leaks must be repaired in 24 hours

Excessive Landscape Irrigation



How are Restrictions Enforced?

- Water Department hires 2 temporary staff to patrol service area and **actively** enforce water waste restrictions during peak season
- Dispatched in field early am, **7 days a week**
- Key tool: **Photograph** the situation and scene
- In the office, enter information about the case, and generate enforcement letter, with photos
- If necessary, make immediate contact

Defining “Excessive Irrigation”



Good Software Helps

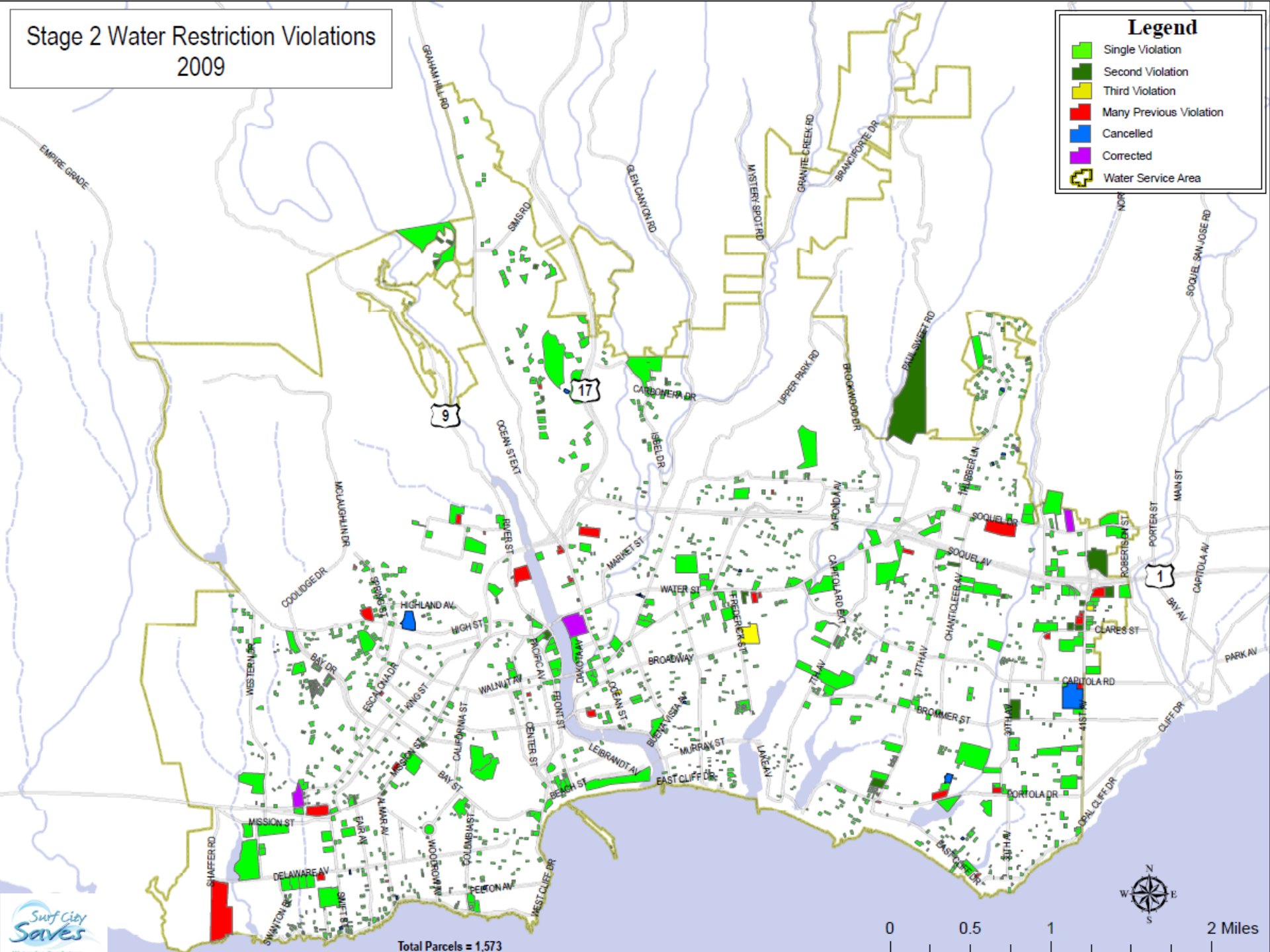
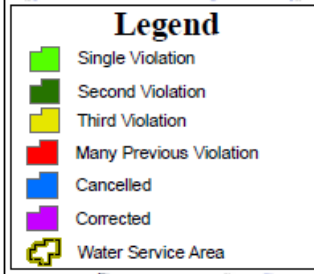
- City uses a system called **ConserveTrack**
- Assigns case number, and logs date, time, source, type of problem, actions taken, and case notes
- Document communications
- Generate form letters
- Store photos
- Process cases
- Easy reference



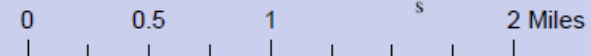
Penalties for Violating Water Restrictions

- First offense: written notice and opportunity to correct the problem
- Second offence: **\$100** penalty
- Third offense: **\$250** penalty
- Fourth offense: **\$500** penalty/flow restrictor
- Penalties are **3X for large users** (customers using over 1 million gallons/year)
- Applied directly on the next utility bill

Stage 2 Water Restriction Violations 2009



Total Parcels = 1,573



Common Problems Found in the Field



Clogged



Tilted



Misaligned



Sunken



Leak



Misaligned

Sprinkler Seal Leak



This is one of the few leaking sprinklers found on this site. Wear and tear over time probably degraded the wiper seal. This sprinkler was already flagged by CCLM for repair.

Sprinkler Water Runoff



Very low water pressure (see large water drops) is causing excessive application in some areas of the lawn. That excessive water is then running off the turf area onto the sidewalk and finally down the drain. See following photographs for improvement suggestions.

Water Waste Hotline

Help Out—
We're in a Drought!

Visit cityofsantacruz.com/drought.



(831) 420-LEAK

Newspaper Quote

Kocher said he also expects neighbors will be policing each other, as has been the case in past years:

"We don't ask people to do that but that's what happens. You'd better get along with your neighbor because if you don't ... be darn sure they're going to rat you out. That's what happened last time."

Results - Positive

- Most cases are resolved with a single contact – **good photos help** to defuse potential conflict
- Many are unaware of the problem and appreciate being informed before it turns into a high bill
- Relatively few elevate to penalty status; **penalty serves as an effective deterrent**

Results - Positive

- Every situation is an opportunity for a positive customer service experience
- Also an opportunity for promoting water conservation services:
 - Household or commercial water audits
 - Lawn removal rebates
 - Technical assistance programming irrigation controllers

Difficulties Encountered

- There will always be some that try to shift blame or deny responsibility
- **Tattling 2.0** everyone has a smart phone and instant access via email these days
- Commercial accounts can be challenging
- Vacant properties, absentee account holders
- Must have a process for issuing exemptions and hearing appeals

So, Does Tattling on Your Neighbor Really Work?

- Not as well as being proactive about water waste enforcement
- Whether it works or not, you are going to hear about it one way or another, so be prepared
- In the end, water waste prevention is part of good customer service expected of any responsible water utility

Contact Information

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