



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# Drought and Conservation

## How severe is this drought?

We are in a historic drought. It is the worst drought on record. We have had two consecutive dry years, and rainfall levels for more than 17 months have been the lowest we have on record in more than 140 years. Our reservoir storage capacity is the lowest it has been in more than 40 years. Marin Water's Board of Directors declared a water shortage emergency in April, and adopted mandatory water use restrictions to preserve our water supply. Water conservation is crucial.

## What mandatory water use restrictions are in place?

The mandatory water use restrictions include:

- Spray irrigation is limited to no more than two days per week.
- Drip irrigation is limited to no more than three days per week.
- Outdoor watering is prohibited between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. to prevent evaporation.
- Covers are required for all pools and spas. (Liquid covers are acceptable).
- Do not wash vehicles at home. Use a carwash that reuses water or uses recycled water instead.
- Do not power wash homes or businesses.
- Do not wash driveways or sidewalks.
- Do not waste water. Flooding gutters is prohibited.
- Leaks must be fixed within 48 hours of being discovered.

For a full list of the mandatory water use rules, visit [MarinWater.org/WaterRules](https://www.marinwater.org/WaterRules).

## Is Marin Water better prepared for drought today?

Yes. We are always working to manage our water supply effectively and efficiently. We are also looking at both short and long-term solutions to what is a statewide crisis. Since the last mega-drought of the 1970s, the water district has made significant improvements to increase our water supply:

- Kent Lake's capacity was doubled in 1983.
- Soulajule Reservoir was added to our system as a seventh reservoir, further increasing capacity.
- A direct pipeline was built to Sonoma Water's Russian River system, and we receive about 25 percent of our water through this pipeline.

- A successful partnership with Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District provides recycled water to a portion of our service area, saving potable water for essential uses.
- An enhanced leak detection team is in place to find and repair leaks on district pipelines and save water.
- A more comprehensive water conservation program was developed. We offer programs and incentives, including rebates on lawn replacements, graywater systems and "smart" irrigation controllers. More rebates were added to address the current drought, including rebates for Flume flow meters that provide real-time water usage data directly to customers, hot water recirculators, and free delivery and installation of mulch. We also provide free water-efficient fixtures for our customers. Learn more at [MarinWater.org/Rebates](http://MarinWater.org/Rebates) or email us at [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org).

## Can Marin Water use recycled water to help with the drought?

Marin Water does have a recycled water program that currently serves some customers in the Terra Linda area of San Rafael. We are working with the County of Marin to develop recycled water filling stations, where customers could bring containers to pick up recycled water for irrigation. We are also working with the sanitation agencies in our service area to use recycled water for their sewer cleaning operations, and requiring the use of recycled water for things such as dust control.

Recycled water requires a separate distribution system to avoid the possibility of cross-connections with potable water. We are looking at expanding our recycled water program to other parts of our service area, but that would require the construction of treatment plants, pump stations, and distribution systems, as well as retrofitting customers' private irrigation and/or plumbing systems and it is a longer-term project.

## Is graywater an option in Marin?

Yes. The County of Marin made regulatory changes allowing the installation of residential graywater systems. See [their website](#) for more information. Graywater systems allow you to reuse water from your washing machine for irrigation. We offer free graywater webinars and a \$100 rebate on graywater kits. Visit [MarinWater.org/Rebates](http://MarinWater.org/Rebates) to learn more about our graywater program.

## Why is Phoenix Lake so low?

Phoenix Lake is a reserve reservoir for the district, and it is not usually tapped for our water supply. Due to the severe drought, we have been pumping water from Phoenix Lake into Bon Tempe so that it can be incorporated into our water supply.

## Will you put a pipeline across the Richmond Bridge?

The district's primary focus is on conservation. During a severe drought like this one, water districts have the responsibility to consider all options to increase water supplies, both short and long term. The pipeline on the bridge is one of several options the district is exploring if this drought continues to persist into the typically wet winter months.

## Why doesn't Marin Water dredge reservoirs to create more water storage?

Dredging our reservoirs to create more room for water storage sounds like a simple project, but it is not. Several factors make such a project costly, complex and time consuming. Dredging the reservoirs would require complex engineering and studies to ensure the structural integrity of the reservoir is not compromised. The removal and disposal of dredged material is also very costly. A dredging project, if possible, would take years to plan, permit, and implement.

## Why is Marin Water releasing water for fish right now when people are being asked to save water?

Without a special exemption from the state, Marin Water is required by law to continue releasing water from our reservoirs into the creeks to support habitat for fish and other aquatic species, including the endangered coho salmon. Due to the severe drought, the district is conducting a study to determine if stream releases could be reduced without creating significant impact.

## Is Marin Water considering building a desalination plant to address the current drought?

The district's primary focus is on conservation. During a severe drought like this one, it is important to consider all options, both short and long term. We are exploring all supplemental water supply options, including desalination, if the drought continues into the winter.

## Is Marin Water asking residents to limit their water user to a certain amount?

We are asking customers to save as much water as they can. Our collective goal is a 40 percent reduction in overall water use districtwide. We are not asking all customers to individually save 40 percent. Some customers can reduce their water use even more, while others are already saving water and using minimal amounts. With all of us making our best effort to save water, we can reach our collective conservation goal.

## What can I do to help save water?

Everyone should save as much water as possible. The biggest savings is through reducing outdoor water use. Turn off your irrigation system and water only by hand when necessary. Follow the water use restrictions, limit irrigation, do not wash vehicles at home, do not power wash homes and businesses, and do not wash sidewalks and driveways. Replacing your lawn with drought-resistant landscaping saves large amounts of water, and we offer rebates to help.

Simple changes to your daily routine will also make a difference. Taking shorter showers, turning off the water while brushing your teeth, and doing dishes and laundry only when you have full loads will save water. Save the water that you use to wash your fruits and vegetables and reuse it for irrigation. Using a bucket to capture and reuse the water from your shower while you wait for the water to get warm also saves water.

Our website is a great resource. Visit [MarinWater.org/Conserve](http://MarinWater.org/Conserve) for information about drought and our daily water supply, conservation tips, water-saving rebates and programs, and water conservation resources.

## I already save water, what else can I do?

Thank you for your water conservation efforts! You can help us spread the word by talking to friends and family about the urgent need to save water. You can also place a water conservation yard sign at your home or business. Contact [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org) or call 415.945.1520 to schedule a contactless pickup.

Join our Water Watch team and be on the lookout for water waste. If you see water waste, you can report it using this online form: [marinwater.org/forms/water-waste-report](http://marinwater.org/forms/water-waste-report), call 415.945.1523, or send an email to [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org). Please include photos or videos and as much detail as possible when submitting a report. This will help the district respond as quickly as possible to address water waste.

## What is Marin Water doing to help customers save water?

Saving water is a partnership. We offer programs and incentives to save water, including rebates for things like replacing your lawn with water-efficient landscaping, graywater systems and "smart" irrigation controllers. Email us at [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org) or call 415.945.1523. Our website also has information at [MarinWater.org/Conserve](http://MarinWater.org/Conserve).

- Install a Flume flow meter to get real-time data on your water use to help you detect leaks and save water. It is easy to install and straps on to your existing water meter. Purchase and install your Flume, and pay \$50 plus tax and shipping with your Marin Water discount. Visit [FlumeWater.com/Marin](http://FlumeWater.com/Marin) to order your flow meter.
- Request a personalized review of your water usage. A water efficiency expert will create an individualized plan to save water at your home or business.
- Make sure you have water-efficient fixtures. We offer free hose shutoff nozzles, faucet aerators and showerheads to customers.
- Replace your lawn and get a rebate of \$3 per square-foot.
- Let us do the work for you. Sign-up for our Mulch Madness program and we will deliver and install mulch material and cap your existing sprinkler system.
- Install a "smart" irrigation controller that automatically adjusts to the weather to deliver just the right amount of water. We offer rebates to help.
- Check for leaks and fix them as soon as you find them. We offer free leak detection dye tablets.
- Replace your older washing machine with a high-efficiency model and apply for a rebate of up to \$100.
- Cover your pool or spa with a new cover and get a rebate of up to \$100.
- Install a new hot water recirculating system and get a rebate of up to \$50.

## How do I determine how much water I am saving?

Marin Water offers a substantial discount on Flume flow meters that deliver real-time water usage data directly to your phone or computer. Flume will help detect leaks and show you ways to save water. Visit [FlumeWater.com/Marin](http://FlumeWater.com/Marin) to order your Flume today.

Marin Water reads all our customers' water meters and sends out a bill with water consumption information every two months. You will be able to see how many gallons of water you used compared to the previous bill. In addition, you can manually read your water meter yourself to find out your water use. Download our easy-to-follow [instructions](#).

Marin Water is a member of the Alliance for Water Use Efficiency, which offers an online water calculator. Using this calculator, you can estimate how much water you are using based on your household size and whether you have landscaping, high-efficiency toilets, etc. Go to [www.home-water-works.org/calculator](http://www.home-water-works.org/calculator).

## Why doesn't Marin Water do monthly billing instead?

Shifting to monthly billing would require significant cost, not only to update the software related to the billing system, but also to shift meter reading to a monthly schedule. That would require significantly more staff and customer support. There are benefits to having monthly data available for our customers and Marin Water's Board of Directors will be reviewing this issue, given the severity of the drought.

## What are you doing about water wasters?

With new mandatory water use restrictions now in place, we will issue written warnings for first time violations. A second violation will result in a \$25 fine, and any subsequent violations will result in a \$250 fine.

Preventing water waste is essential to preserving our water supply. If you see water waste, report it by emailing us at [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org), or calling us at 415.945.1523. You can also report water waste using our online form: [MarinWater.org/Forms/Water-Waste-Report](https://www.marinwater.org/forms/water-waste-report).

## What is Marin Water doing to help local farmers during the drought?

Marin Water is a municipal water system, meaning we supply water to urban customers and typically do not serve farmers or ranchers. Most of the farmers or ranchers in Marin receive water from wells. That said, we are all in this together, and we are working with the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner to assist farmers and ranchers in the County during the current drought if needed.

## What is Marin Water doing to help businesses conserve?

We have rebate programs designed specifically for businesses. Visit [MarinWater.org/Rebates](https://www.marinwater.org/rebates) to learn more. We also provide water efficiency consultations to make sure businesses are implementing all available water-saving practices. Marin Water provides signage, for example, "water served on request" signs for restaurants, and conservation cards for hotel customers and other businesses. Our Water Efficiency team is here to help: call 415.945.1520 or email [Conservation@MarinWater.org](mailto:Conservation@MarinWater.org).

## What is Marin Water doing to help other government agencies conserve?

We are working closely with our partners to ensure they have the latest conservation information and are using water wisely. There are also water use rules that apply, including no watering of grass on public medians.

## Will we run out of water?

No. Marin Water is looking at a variety of options to secure additional emergency water supplies, if necessary.