

Entranosa Water News

March 29, 2007

Billing Address. For those folks that utilize a billing service, or that choose to not use the return envelope that comes with the bill – please note that the address to send a payment is PO Box 925, Albuquerque, NM 87103-0925. Our regular mailing address is 1330 State Highway 333, Tijeras, NM 87059, which is our office location.

Drought Watch. We monitor, on a regular basis, the web sites that address drought issues. This past Tuesday, March 27th, the US Drought Monitor listed our region as “normal” – whatever that is. During the same period last year, the site indicated we were in long term, moderate, drought. The Long-Term Palmer Drought Severity Index described an identical condition. The Drought Outlook says current conditions will persist through June (the extent of the prediction).

Conservation Ordinances. The Bernalillo County Commission approved a water conservation ordinance on March 13th, and it will be come effective on April 12th. Santa Fe County has had such an ordinance for several years. The ordinances differ, but they have the same focus – to provide guidelines for domestic conservation. On the reverse side of this newsletter, we’ve provided some of the highlights. We hope it is helpful. You may obtain copies of the ordinances from the respective county offices, but we’ll have copies available at our office as well. Additionally – House Bill 13, addressing municipal and county authority to drive conservation, passed the legislature this year and has been signed into law.

Water Hardness. We measured about 20 grains of hardness at the office on the evening of March 28th. We expect it to remain there until the middle of April and then start to rise as our pumping increases - topping out in late May at about 27 grains – but it will vary by pressure and distribution zones on the system (as high as 32 grains, as low as 22 grains).

Water Use. Our pumping this past month was less than last year for the same period. It is amazing what a little moisture and cold weather will do! The average residential meter consumed 4,956 gallons. The previous two years, the average residential use for March was 5,484 gallons in 2005, and 5,890 gallons in 2006

Rate Study. The board is continuing to work on a rate analysis for the water and wastewater components of our operation. It has been a very productive process.

Bernalillo County Fire Hydrants. We’ve received a map from the County showing the GPS’d location of all the fire hydrants checked by the Fire Department last June. The good news is – they have all of ours on the map. It seems we support about 90% of the hydrants in the East Mountains, in Bernalillo County. Thought you’d like to know.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG – IT IS THE LAW 260-1990

Entranosa Water & Wastewater Association
281-8700

County Ordinances on Water Conservation

Water is often described as our most precious resource – Water is Life - Aqua es Vida. We can live without the modern conveniences (phone, electricity), although it would be difficult – but we can't live without water. It is not a mineral, it is not a commodity that can be bought and sold on the futures market – but water rights permits DO become a private property right. I don't need to tell you how important water is, or the thousands of ways we use it. Aqua es Vida.

In the Estancia Basin, over 90% of the water pumped from the Basin goes to agricultural purposes. Domestic uses (household uses) account for less than five percent of the uses. Municipalities and Counties have the right to 'condition' the uses of water, by ordinance. Both counties, Santa Fe and Bernalillo, have done that – Santa Fe in 2002, and Bernalillo in March of this year. Both counties declare that 'water waste' is a bad thing – the issue is defining what it is.

- The Bernalillo County ordinance has more depth, definition and flexibility, and the Santa Fe County ordinance covers a broader scope of activities with less depth and definition. Both ordinances have aspects unique to themselves.
- Both counties exempt agricultural uses from the ordinance – so – 90% of the uses in our area are exempt from the requirements of either ordinance. Thus, both ordinances are severely limited with respect to the amount of impact they'll have on the overall conservation of water.
- Both counties prohibit outdoor watering between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. during certain times of the year – with conditions. The prohibition in Bernalillo goes from 1 April to 31 October – the prohibition in Santa Fe goes from May through September.
- Both counties require new construction to employ low-water-use fixtures. Santa Fe requires all residences to have retrofitted their fixtures by 1 January 2005.
- Both counties address rain water harvesting, or roof collection. Santa Fe mandates it for all new construction, Bernalillo requires it, starting in January 2010, unless other measures are taken (so it is an option).
- Both counties prohibit water waste and fugitive water, the definitions of which (in each county) are mildly different.
- Both counties have developed a series of penalties for non-compliance, with escalating fines. Bernalillo County has the option of imposing criminal penalties.
- The Bernalillo ordinance makes reference to stages of drought, which will be covered in a future drought ordinance, yet to be drafted.

We believe conservation is an integral part of water management – for us, for local government, and for the state. Conservation is one of the three considerations mandated by state law when the Office of the State Engineer considers a water rights application. Folks in the East Mountains use less water per capita than do their neighbors in Albuquerque or Santa Fe – the life styles are different, and there is greater community awareness in the East Mountains for the need, and the ways, to conserve water. "Conservation" is a complicated policy issue; the ordinances and the space available to us in this newsletter can not do it justice – but we hope this is somewhat helpful.