

Entranosa Water News

May 1, 2008

Update

Drought Watch. We monitor, on a regular basis, the web sites that address drought issues and status. This past Tuesday, April 29th, the US Drought Monitor listed our region as “abnormally dry”, which is the first stage of drought. During the same period two years ago, the site indicated we were in “severe drought”. The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook says current conditions will persist through July (the extent of the prediction), and (based on reports we’ve read) we anticipate a routine monsoonal season in early July.

Water Use. Our pumping this year is higher than last year for the same period and usage is up. The average residential meter registered 6,920 gallons. The average residential usage for April, in the past two years, was 7,157 gallons in 2006 and 5,257 in 2007.

Conservation Ordinances. We’ve taken a number of calls from folks about advertisements they’ve seen about conserving water. While nothing that the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority requires is binding on anyone in the east mountains – they DO represent good guidelines. Citizens of the counties must obey county ordinances and both counties have a water conservation ordinance – the Town of Edgewood does not. 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 which we hope are helpful. You may obtain copies of the ordinances from the appropriate offices for each county but we have copies available at our office if you’d like them. There are some differences between our Conservation Plan and the ordinances issued by the County’s (we developed ours first) and, while encouraging reasonable use, we’ve always said that you should use what you need – no more and no less ... where that conflicts with the law – we suggest that you obey the law.

Water Hardness. Our hardness is very high right now – we had to take one of our wells off line for some unplanned maintenance (it’ll be back online soon) and we’ve had to increase pumping from other wells and they produce water that is much harder – but wet. System hardness is about 29 grains right now and it’ll stay in the 25 to 30 grain range through the summer.

Rates. The amount we pay for electrical power to serve our wells and pumps has risen almost 30% in the past year, and electricity is about 20% of our annual budget. Our truck fleet runs on diesel fuel (now \$4/gallon) and PNM is about to implement a 6% rate hike. Thus – we’ve started to evaluate our rates again (sorry) and it’ll take about two months to complete – but just based on what we are paying for electricity, an increase in water rates of 4% to 6%, around the 1st of July, would not be surprising. We might have a better sense of the affects next month, and we’ll let you know.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG – IT IS THE LAW 260-1990 or 811

County Ordinances on Water Conservation

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 demand. Municipalities and Counties have enacted ordinances that ‘condition’ the uses of water throughout the State, including the counties of Bernalillo (last year) and Santa Fe (in 2002). Both counties declare that ‘water waste’ is a bad thing – the issue is defining what that means.

Water is often described as our most precious resource – Water is Life - Aqua es Vida. Although it would be difficult, we can live without the modern conveniences (phone, electricity) – but we can’t live without water, and it is less plentiful, in our area, than we’d like. A quick overview of the two county ordinances:

- 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 and are focused on 10% of the use..
- 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 runs from 1 April to 31 October – the prohibition in Santa Fe goes from May thru 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. Federal law required this a long time ago.
- 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 – but if water is running off of your property – it is considered ‘fugitive’.
- 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. Folks in the east mountain area use less water per capita than their neighbors in Albuquerque or Santa Fe because the life styles are different, and the community has a greater respect for water, as well as awareness 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. Aqua es Vida.