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Jurupa services district plans vote on watering restrictions

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10:00 PM PDT on Saturday, August 22, 2009

By SANDRA STOKLEY
The Press-Enterprise

MIRA LOMA - Residents in the Eastvale and Jurupa areas will be barred from hosing down driveways and patios and watering yards between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. under a water conservation ordinance going before the Jurupa Community Services District board of directors Monday night.

If the ordinance is approved, the community services district will become the latest in a growing number of Inland water agencies to adopt measures aimed at getting customers to cut use because of California's drought..

"We are in a water crisis in California," said Eldon Horst, general manager of the community services district. "All water agencies need to have this type of ordinance in place."

The district has an estimated 25,000 water connections in the unincorporated Riverside County communities of Eastvale, Pedley, Glen Avon, Sunnyslope and parts of Mira Loma.

If the ordinance is adopted, it will take effect immediately.

The proposed ordinance lays out four levels of drought conditions, with Level 1 outlining a series of voluntary use restrictions to achieve up to a 10 percent water reduction.

But even at Level 1, "unreasonable uses of water" are barred. Those uses include hosing down driveways or sidewalks, failing to repair a leak or watering in the heat of the day when the water evaporates more quickly.

Levels 2, 3 and 4 would impose mandatory restrictions such as limiting lawn and landscape watering to three days per week, barring the use of ornamental fountains and requiring residents to take their cars and vehicles to commercial car washes, which often use recycled water.

Violations of water restrictions set out in levels 2, 3 and 4 are subject to civil, administrative and even criminal penalties, according to the ordinance.

The proposed ordinance is raising concerns, particularly among residents living in the older, more rural sections of Jurupa where larger lots allow the keeping of horses, goats and other livestock.

"I have two horses, and each horse drinks about 20 gallons of water per day," said Ellen Kleinbeck, who has lived in Pedley for 18 years.

Kleinbeck said she already conserves water by taking shorter showers, watering her lawn in the early morning twice a week and sweeping her driveway and patio.

"I'm already making a concerted effort to save water," Kleinbeck said. "Where are they going to set my

standard at if I'm already conserving?"

"I have the same question myself," said Kathryn Bogart, president of the district's board of directors. "I've been conserving for a long time and I don't think I can cut back more."

Bogart said she has installed artificial turf in her backyard, waters her lawn in the early morning three days a week and has low-flow toilets and shower heads.

Horst said those are all valid concerns that will be addressed during the first year if the ordinance is adopted Monday. He said the first year will be devoted to educating customers about the importance of conserving water, urging voluntary compliance and learning what works best to get that compliance.

"We have a learning experience to undertake as an agency," Horst said. "We should be able to devise a system that is equitable.

"We don't want to be punitive with our customers," he said.

Reach Sandra Stokley at 951-368-9647 or a sstokley@PE.com

Water wise

The Jurupa Community Services District board of directors will consider a water ordinance that lays out four levels of conservation based on drought conditions.

WHEN: Monday at 7 p.m.

WHERE: 11201 Harrel St.

INFORMATION: 951-685-7434