

**COASTAL WATER SUPPLY ISSUES:
Water limits loom in dry year
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By Shanna McCord, MediaNews**

SANTA CRUZ - This time last year, hardly anyone left home without an umbrella.

The city now faces its driest year since 1990, and Santa Cruz's 25,000 water customers could be forced to cut back on washing their cars and watering lawns if the skies don't open up in the next couple of months.

"It's pretty ugly," said Bill Kocher, the city's Water Department director. "We haven't seen the rainfall pattern we need to see."

Total rainfall in the city since July measures 22 inches; the normal average is 37 inches.

Water flowing from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the San Lorenzo River, the city's primary supply, is a fraction of what it should be, with only 16,700 acre-feet of water coming in to the river since October, Kocher said. During a normal rainy season, water pouring in to the river is in the range of 90,000 acre-feet. Last year, the San Lorenzo River received 120,000 acre-feet.

The "critically dry" situation, as city officials have dubbed it, has prompted the Water Department to look at restricting water use.

During summer, when water demand pushes 14 million gallons a day, outdoor water use is likely to be prohibited between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., Kocher said. Watering turf, gardens and landscaping would be limited to morning and evening if the restriction goes into effect.

Staff from the Water Department would monitor water use and hand out tickets to anyone violating the municipal code.

Exceptions to the rules could be made for professional gardeners, Kocher said. Showers and other indoor water uses would not be affected.

To meet summer demands, Santa Cruz is expected to rely on its reserve water supply at Loch Lomond dam. But the Water Department must continue to save water stored at Loch Lomond in case of another rain shortfall next winter, Kocher said.

The National Weather Service doesn't expect any major rain storms in Santa Cruz in the near future. Up to 4 inches are expected to fall between now and April, meteorologist Steve Anderson said.

"The long-range climate outlook is for normal rainfall," Anderson said. "Whatever we're down, I don't think we anticipate making any of it up."

The decision to put water use restrictions in place will be made in April.

Other areas of Santa Cruz County aren't dealing with the same water dilemma because the majority of water districts are supplied by underground wells, which are slower to react to rainfall shortages.

Dry year will likely lead to Santa Cruz water restrictions **Associated Press – 3/8/07**

Water restrictions will likely be imposed this summer in Santa Cruz after what is shaping up to be the driest season since 1990.

"It's pretty ugly. We haven't seen the rainfall pattern we need to see," city Water Department director Bill Kocher said.

Total rainfall in the city since July 1, when the rain season begins, measures 22 inches, well below the normal average 37 inches of rain.

The city's 25,000 water customers could be forced to cut back on washing their cars and watering lawns if the skies don't open up in the next couple months, officials said.

Water flow from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the San Lorenzo River, the city's primary supply, is a fraction of what it should be. Only 16,700 acre feet of water has flowed into the river since October, while last year the water flow was 120,000 acre feet.

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