



**Sunnyslope
Water District**

Spring/Summer 2024

New: sign up for
immediate leak alerts P. 4

Projects update P. 3

High quality water, from
treatment plant to tap P. 2

Water lines

News you can use from your Sunnyslope Water District

Water supply update

Stormy winters fill reservoirs

It looked like California would have below normal precipitation this last rainy season, but late storms quickly brought rain levels up to average. This year the state had a total of 25 atmospheric rivers from January through March, filling reservoirs and bringing the last snow survey of the year on April 1 up to 105 percent of normal.

Initially, the Hollister urban area received 60 percent of our annual imported surface water allocation for 2024, but that was raised to 75 percent due to the late rain. Thanks to our 100 percent allocation in 2023, we can use stored water from the local San Justo Reservoir to make up the difference. This means both our West Hills and Lessalt Water Treatment Plants can continue delivering high-quality drinking water to customers using a high percentage of surface water to improve the hardness of local well water.



WEATHER SWINGS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
Hollister depends on imported surface water from the San Luis Reservoir to improve water quality and meet our water needs. This March 2023 photo shows a full reservoir when only six months earlier it was only one quarter full during the drought. Photo by Brian Washburn



¿Prefieres tu newsletter en español?

Por favor, visite sunnyslopewater.org
y haga clic en el enlace del
boletín para ver o descargar.
¡Muchas gracias!

Conservation safeguards our groundwater

Although our local water supply is currently stable, ongoing water conservation as a lifestyle remains vital to protect our underground aquifers. We depend upon groundwater during drought when our county does not receive a full allocation of imported surface water, and local water storage is low. Imported water restored our groundwater basins from overdraft in the 1970s. Thanks to winter storms, the North San

Benito Basin which provides well water for the Hollister urban area is well above minimum thresholds, but it is still below pre-drought levels. This swinging weather pattern from hot, dry droughts to extreme storm seasons is the hallmark of climate change to which we must adapt. In addition to conservation efforts, local agencies are working (Cont. on page 4)

**Sign up for
paperless
or autopay
and win a \$100
gift card!**



Get two chances to win when you sign up for both! Just click on the contest icon at sunnyslopewater.org to enroll, and you'll be automatically entered to win a \$100 gift card to the Running Rooster restaurant. We congratulate our most recent winners, Rochelle Martinez and Alex Estrada, and thank our many conscientious customers who have signed up to save time and money, and help keep water rates down.

ALL AMERICAN MAILING
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Sunnyslope Water
3570 Airline Hwy.
Hollister, CA 95023



Have questions? Need help with your bill?

We're here for you! Please don't hesitate to call us at (831) 637-4670. One of our friendly customer service representatives (such as Valeria, pictured above), can answer your questions about water service or billing.

During COVID, Sunnyslope shouldered over \$400,000 in outstanding water bill balances, but now that number is down to \$100,000. If you're having difficulty paying your bill, please give us a call—we can help you structure a payment plan that fits your budget and brings your account current.



**Sunnyslope
Water District**

Providing reliable, high-quality, cost-effective water and sanitary services to our community, to protect human health and the environment

3570 Airline Hwy, Hollister, CA 95023
(831) 637-4670 • sunnyslopewater.org
Open Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

Free 24-hour emergency service:

If you think your water meter is leaking, or you see water gushing in the street, it is an emergency. Do not hesitate to contact us at (831) 637-4670, day or night! Our on-call staff will return your call immediately.

The public is welcome to attend Sunnyslope Water District board meetings, held every fourth Tuesday of the month at 5:15 pm. To attend remotely via Zoom, please click the board meeting link at sunnyslopewater.org.

Board of Directors

Ed Mauro, President
James Parker, Vice-president
Mike Alcorn
Dorothy (Dee) Brown
Jerry Buzzetta

General Manager

Drew Lander, P.E.

6,023

sign-ups for paperless/autopay

More and more of our 7,591 customers have made the switch to paperless and/or autopay to save time, money, hassle, and the planet. Sign up now to win a \$100 gift card (see page one) and help keep water bills as low as possible.

We'll email or text you when your bill is ready to view online, where you can schedule a payment and see previous bills. With autopay, we'll deduct your bill on the 15th of the month, and alert you beforehand. Sign-up is easy—just visit sunnyslopewater.org and click the WaterSmart link. If you need assistance please call (831) 637-4670!

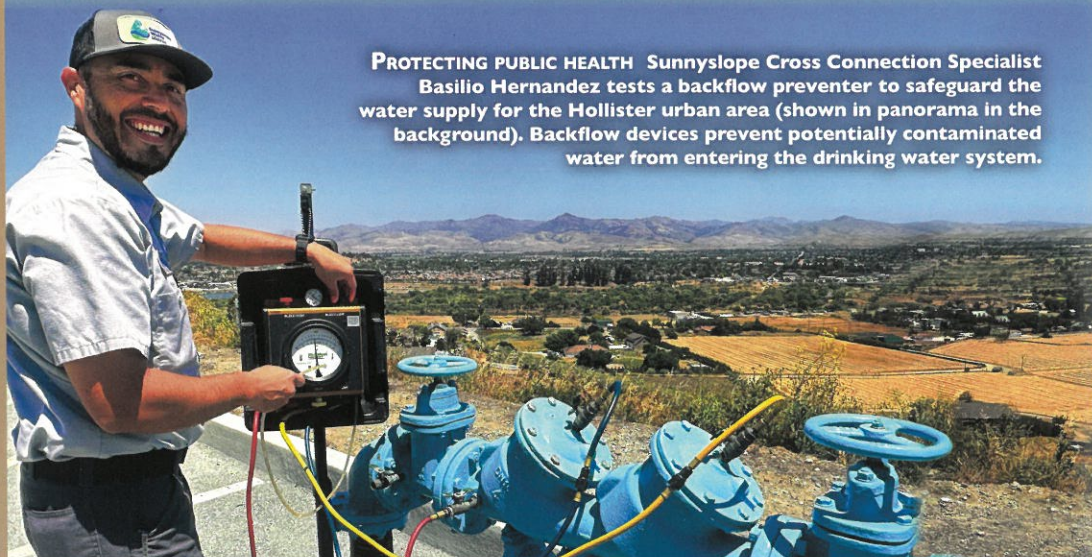


SET IT AND FORGET IT
With autopay, your bill is on time every time. We'll alert you before we deduct the amount from your bank account, debit card, or credit card.

High quality water—from treatment plant to tap

Each year, Sunnyslope Water conducts over 15,000 tests at 114 locations throughout our water treatment, transmission, and distribution system—and we've had no water quality violations in the last 26 years. But testing is just one way that we ensure the purity, safety, and aesthetic quality of the water the runs out of your tap. Here are just a few of our ongoing quality control measures:

- With restored water allocations last year, we were able to increase hydroflushing of our water mains. During flushing, our crews systematically force water through sections of the distribution system using a high flow rate to scour and clean the line. This removes buildup of naturally occurring sediment and debris to retain water clarity and aesthetics.
- There are 246 active backflow devices within Sunnyslope's jurisdiction which prevent potentially contaminated water from entering the public drinking water system. We verify that each one is tested annually by a certified technician to ensure that every device is operating properly to protect our water supply. Backflow preventers are required for commercial and industrial properties such as restaurants, hospitals, apartment complexes, and properties that contain chemicals, fertilizers, or other hazardous substances.
- We have recently installed new state-of-the art chlorine testing meters and turbidity analyzers at our Lessalt Water Treatment Plant. The new equipment allows us to make even more precise adjustments in filtration and chemical treatment to improve water quality, increase efficiency, and reduce chemical costs.
- Fire hydrants connect to water mains, and over time the water in those dead end pipelines can contain aging water and sediment. Sunnyslope crews regularly flush our community's fire hydrants to protect our water supply. Last year we flushed 315 of the total 1,000 hydrants in our jurisdiction.

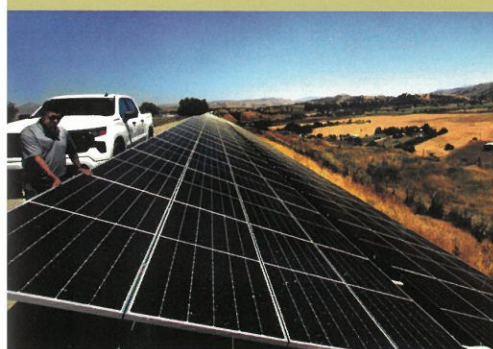


PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH Sunnyslope Cross Connection Specialist Basilio Hernandez tests a backflow preventer to safeguard the water supply for the Hollister urban area (shown in panorama in the background). Backflow devices prevent potentially contaminated water from entering the drinking water system.

Safer truck now in service

Sunnyslope Water recently purchased a new \$530,000 vacuum truck to better maintain our community's drinking water infrastructure. The truck meets current air quality regulations and replaces our second-hand, circa-2009 truck, which was past its useful life and could only be used for a limited number of hours per month due to its higher emissions. The sale of our previous truck offset purchase costs by \$51,000.

Vacuum tanker trucks excavate soil and suck up dirt and water around broken buried pipelines. They are the only OSHA-approved method of digging before buried utilities have been marked. To avoid damage and injuries, all other forms of digging legally require an Underground Service Alert waiting period of two to three days to locate gas, electric, and cable lines. Vacuum excavation allows Sunnyslope crews to perform pipeline repairs immediately and safely, so we can save water, reduce labor costs, and restore customer service as soon as possible.



The new solar array at our Ridgemark Wastewater Treatment Plant will provide enough energy to pay for 84 percent of Sunnyslope's power needs.

Project updates . . .

Slashing costs with solar

Our 500 kilowatt solar array project is now online, dramatically reducing our energy costs and carbon footprint across all our operations, and helping to keep water rates down. The array will generate enough energy to cover approximately \$210,000 of Sunnyslope's total \$250,000 annual power bill. In addition, other energy efficiency projects planned over the next five years should bring Sunnyslope's annual power bill to zero.

Total cost of the project was \$1,540,000,

and we have been reimbursed \$462,000 through the federal 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. With all savings taken into account, the solar array should pay for itself in four years.

Partnership supports college and creates more recycled water

Construction of sewer mains to connect the new Gavilan College San Benito County campus to Sunnyslope Water was completed in June. The developers of the future Fairview Corners (adjacent to the college) paid for sewer line construction for the college and the nearby Cielo Vista neighborhood (which has a failing sewer system) in exchange for connecting to the Sunnyslope system. Sunnyslope will provide all sewer collection services and will pay the City of Hollister to treat the wastewater.

Thanks to this creative solution, the college did not have to pay \$0.5 million for a septic system, and used that money to buy classroom technology equipment instead. The project will also provide more recycled water through the Hollister Water Reclamation Facility.

New customers to share cost

The annexation of three local water providers into the Sunnyslope Water system is proceeding on schedule. The annexations include approximately 450 existing homes and businesses from nearby neighborhoods to share ratepayer costs—without new housing development, and at no expense to Sunnyslope customers.

We are administering a \$13.6 million grant from the Urban Community Drought Relief Program to extend service to Tres Pinos Water District and nearby Stonegate water system. Best Road Mutual Water Company, which serves the Heatherwood, Fox Hills Estates, and Fischer subdivisions, has received a \$2.2 million grant to connect to our system. Services are slated to go online by 2026 so that these communities (some living with boil notices) can receive safe, reliable drinking water.

You ask;
we answer!



“How can I make sure I don't have a water leak?”

To manually test for a leak, turn off all faucets and water-using appliances (such as dishwasher, ice maker, etc.), then check the dial or digital leak indicator on your water meter to see if flow is still registering. For detailed instructions on how to read different meters, visit sunnyslopewater.org/newsletters and check out the back page of our Winter 2022 issue. There you'll find directions on how to determine if your leak is inside or outside your home, as well as a checklist for toilet leaks, which can be hard to detect.

A silent toilet leak can waste 500 gallons of water per day. Test your toilet by adding five to six drops of food coloring to the tank and waiting a half hour or so to see if the coloring shows up in the bowl.

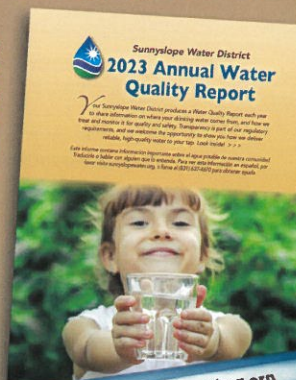
Immediate leak alerts

Sunnyslope Water's new metering system goes online in August and will allow customers to receive immediate leak alerts via text, email, or phone message (see back page article). To sign up, please click the leak alert link on the sunnyslopewater.org home page, or call us for assistance.

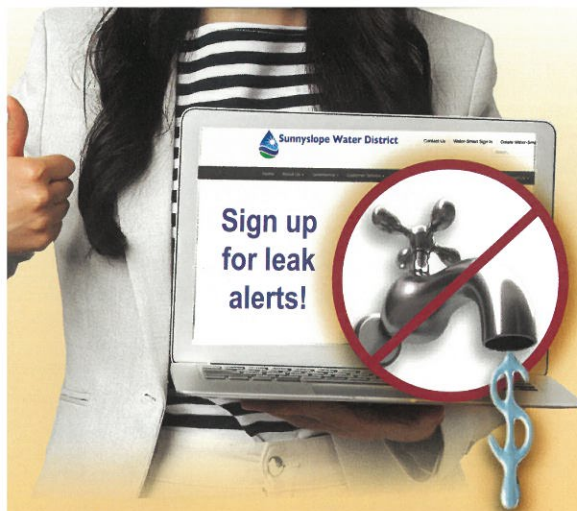
Have a question? Please email us at billing@sunnyslopewater.org, or call (831) 637-4670. Your question may appear in this newsletter!

Get the facts on your drinking water!

Sunnyslope's Annual Water Quality Report was recently mailed to all customers. You can also access it online in English and Spanish by clicking the link on our home page.



sunnyslopewater.org



Big news!
Immediate
leak alerts are
coming soon:
sign up now to
prevent big bills!

It can happen to anyone: a shockingly high water bill after a hose is left on, a pipe or irrigation tubing springs a leak, or your toilet flapper gives up the ghost. With our current conventional water metering, a Sunnyslope representative must drive by every customer's property once a month to get a reading, so leaks can go undetected for weeks at a time. By the end of August, our new Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system will be able to detect leaks every day, and send you an immediate notification. To receive alerts you must sign up at our WaterSmart portal and let us know how you want to be notified: by text, email, phone, or any combination.

How the new metering system works

Every evening, your water meter will transmit the previous day's hour-by-hour water usage to our server via a secure radio frequency. This will allow us to detect continual or higher than normal usage immediately so we can send you a leak alert within a day or two. Encrypted metering data is transmitted via antennas and repeaters which have been strategically installed on power poles throughout the Sunnyslope district. This faster and more accurate AMI system is becoming the standard for utilities nationwide.

You can access all your detailed usage data to gain a new level of control over your water bill when you sign in to your WaterSmart account. There you can view easy-to-read graphics that track your daily water use hour by hour. You can also compare your usage to similar households and receive recommendations on how to reduce water use.

Never be surprised by a high bill again! Sign up for leak alerts now so you can receive them as soon as our system goes online. Just visit sunnyslopedwater.org and click on the leak alert link, or call us at (831) 637-4670.

Water Supply update *(Cont. from page 1)*

together on water storage projects that will take advantage of heavy rainfall to help ensure our future water supply.

Our community has done a good job conserving water during the drought. Even though the local population has grown by nearly 10,000 over the last decade, demand for water has not increased thanks to conservation, conversion to water-saving appliances, and stringent efficiency mandates for new development. While conservation inside the home is good, about 50 percent of water is still used for outdoor irrigation, where much is wasted by leakage, runoff, overwatering, and maintaining thirsty lawns.

As the dry season begins, it's important to make sure that irrigation systems are operating efficiently. Please call Water Resources Association San Benito County (WRASBC) at (831) 637-4378 to schedule a free checkup. A friendly representative will inspect for leaks and help you program your irrigation controller. At wrasbc.org you can also find rebates on irrigation hardware, free hose nozzles, shower heads, etc., as well as drought-tolerant garden designs and rebates on lawn replacement (see sidebar), low-flow toilets, and more.



With the new AMI system we no longer need to drive by each customer's home every month for meter readings; this saves time and money, and reduces our carbon footprint.

Get paid to retire your water softener

Salt water softeners pollute groundwater, which is why new installations are banned in our area. Hard water is not the problem is used to be in the Hollister area ever since 2014 when we began importing and treating surface water to improve local water quality. If you still have a water softener you might want to shut it off



for awhile to see if you really need it.

You can remove your water softener or replace it with a salt-free water conditioner and receive a \$300 rebate from the Water Resources Association of San Benito County (WRASBC). If you feel you must have a salt water softener, you can still receive a \$250 rebate by transitioning to off-site regeneration, in which the brine is picked up for processing outside the county instead of being discharged into the sewage system. For details, please visit wrasbc.org, or call 637-4378.

More money for turf replacement

The Turf Removal Program received another \$100,000 in funding in June, so now is the time to replace water-guzzling lawns with drought-tolerant landscapes. You can convert from 100 to 1,000 square feet of irrigated lawn and receive a two dollar per square foot rebate (\$200-\$2,000) from the Water Resources Association San Benito County (WRASBC).



Sticky monkey flower is a cheerful, drought-tolerant plant native to Hollister.

To get started, please call (831) 637-4378 to schedule an inspection and see if your yard qualifies. You can also visit wrasbc.org for details and an application form, as well as free, downloadable garden plans featuring native and drought-tolerant plants.



This product is made of material from well-managed FSC®-certified forests and from recycled materials. Printed by a certified Monterey Bay Area Green Business with vegetable-based inks. Please recycle!