



PRESS RELEASE

DECLARATION OF WATER RESTRICTIONS

4pm, May 9, 2018 Taos, NM – On Wednesday, May 2nd at 6pm the Town of Taos lifted its Stage 5 Water Emergency after the replacement of two of the Town’s three primary municipal wells.

Within hours of lifting the emergency, and continuing throughout the weekend, water demand by Town customers skyrocketed to record levels; reaching 1,250,000 gallons, or 25% over the daily average of 1,000,000 gallons per day, and 60% over the Stage 5 average of 750,000 gallons per day.

Initially, the Town anticipated that during the weekend there would be a modest spike in consumption due to pent-up demand that had accumulated during the water emergency, especially for landscape-related watering, but that it would flatten out by Monday morning when most people returned to work.

However, that did not happen, as peak consumption continued into the workweek with heavy demands for irrigation, landscaping and residential as well as commercial uses. By Tuesday morning much of the Town’s 1,500,000 gallon reserve that had built up before lifting the emergency were being exhausted.

To address this increased demand the Town is ordering a larger pump for Well #4 to be installed in about a week, doubling the well’s capacity from 150 gallons per minute to 300 gallons per minute, and we are also accelerating the reopening of one or more older wells, which will take about a month.

In the interim, we have also negotiated with El Prado Water and Sanitation District to reopen the inter-connect between the two systems to allow for supplementing Town pumps with water from outside the system till the larger Well #4 pump arrives and an additional well on the Town side is up and running.

It does appear that the rapid increase in demand this spring, which may have led to the original collapse of Wells #4 and #5 trying to keep up with demand last month, is not going to subside

anytime soon and may be directly related to the “Extreme Drought Conditions” we have been experiencing this spring, as defined by the National Weather Service (NWS).

This would be consistent with the accelerating long-range use patterns in water demand that we have seen since November, when drought conditions began to compound already dry conditions.

Currently we are on the border of and entering into a NWS designation of “Exceptional Drought Conditions”, perhaps within days. Exceptional Droughts are 20-50 year climate events with potentially significant economic and environmental impacts.

With already record high temperatures, low humidity and no relief predicted by the NWS for this month, and possibly into July, combined with projections for a late monsoon season, we are expecting conditions to only worsen and water demand to continue to increase, especially as surface water sources dry up.

Therefore, given both the current and projected levels of demand for municipal water, the Town is imposing drought-related “Water Restrictions”, as outlined in its Water Conservation Ordinance.

The proposed water restrictions do not impact the operation of any business, government or institution and allow uses, including commercial car washes and laundries, to continue as normal, with the exception of outdoor municipal water use.

Residential uses are also unrestricted, with the exception of the use of municipal water outdoors, and asks anyone using water for lawns, landscaping, pools, fountains, hot tubs and other outdoor purposes to follow guidelines for when you can do those activities.

The Water Restrictions being imposed, effective immediately, are as follows:

WATER RESTRICTIONS:

Residential washing of vehicles and outdoor watering for landscaping shall be restricted to one (1) hour per day and shall be done by hand held hose or drip irrigation only, between 6pm and 10am (to avoid rapid evaporation), and per the following schedule:

Even numbered street addresses – Tuesday and Sunday

Odd numbered street addresses – Monday and Saturday

Outdoor watering with sprinkler systems using municipal water on institutional and commercial properties is permitted for one (1) hour per day between 6pm and 10am on the above schedule.

Plants, flowers and tree wells may be watered by the use of hand held buckets, sprinkler cans or other hand-held containers every day of the week between 6pm and 10am.

Watering parks, recreation fields, and other fields and landscaping by the Town, County

and School District and other institutions and businesses from landscaping wells not connected to the municipal water system is permitted at any time or day.

No outdoor washing of windows, buildings, patios, sidewalks or streets unless approved in advance or directed by the Town Public Works Department.

The use of temporary meters for construction or filling from fire hydrants by anyone other than Public Works and the Fire Department is prohibited.

All open/outdoor burning is prohibited. High winds and low humidity at this time have resulted in a total burn ban by Taos County, the Town of Taos and all Taos County municipalities.

All minor residential water leaks must be repaired within three (3) days and serious water leaks must be shut off immediately and fully repaired, as certified by a plumber, before being turned on again or no adjustment or credit will be given by the Utility Department and water service may be terminated by the Town.

Water conservation measures will be encouraged in all owner occupied residential new construction or renovations and required in all commercial new construction and renovations approved by the Planning Department, per Town Code, including the use of low flow showers, toilets and faucets.

A citation for these water restrictions may be issued by the Taos Police Department, Town Code Enforcement or Town Utilities Department staff.

In addition, the Town is asking for and encouraging voluntary compliance with the following water conserving measures by residents and businesses:

Use bottled water for drinking and pets, when possible.

Use showers, rather than baths, and limit use to 10 minutes, where possible.

Limit serving tap water in restaurants only to when requested by customers.

Check for and repair leaky toilets and faucets and dripping outdoor hoses.

Install aerators on indoor faucets.

As residents, we all pulled together to reduce water usage by 250,000 gallons per day during the Water Emergency and assured that no one went without water at any time. We are now asking again for everyone in the community to work together to use water wisely and to conserve where possible so that this drought has as small an impact on all of us as possible.

The Town is doing its best to ensure that there is an adequate supply at all times, both now and in the future, and that we keep costs to everyone as low as possible. If we have to buy water or drill new wells to meet increased demand, that will increase the cost of water to us all.

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PRESS CONTACT: Town Manager Rick Bellis will be serving as the contact person for this release. Rick can be reached at (575) 751-2002 (office), (575) 751-2606 (cell and text) or rbellis@taosgov.com (email).