Water Issues
Frequently Asked Questions

General

Why do we need to conserve water in Woodland?

Currently Woodland's water supply comes completely from groundwater. As groundwater levels decrease, we have to drill further and further down for water supply wells. This increases infrastructure costs. Water conservation savings can decrease the need for water and may mean less retrofitting or drilling of new wells. Community reductions in water use can reduce energy consumption and costs in both the water production and wastewater treatment systems, and can prolong the life of infrastructure components within these systems.

A continued decrease in rainfall and increased demand for water also means that although we currently have adequate groundwater for the city we may not in the near future. In order to avoid mandatory restrictions and cutbacks in water usage, we can conserve now to save water for the future.

How will water meters help with water conservation?

The City of Woodland produces over 450 million gallons of water every month. The majority of water is used by residences which are currently unmetered. Water meters will allow us to see where there are leaks in the system and other water losses. Water meters can be used to accurately track how much water is needed for consumption and peak demands. The ability to track our water usage through the meter readings will allow us to decrease water losses which leads to water and energy savings.

Who do I contact for information on water conservation or to file a water waste complaint?

Information on water conservation can be found on the City's website (www.cityofwoodland.org). The outdoor conservation page has information on water-wise landscaping including plant lists and other resources. A water waste complaint can be submitted electronically from the website or you can contact the Water Conservation Coordinator at (530) 406-5117; waterconservation@cityofwoodland.org.

What is the Water Conservation Initiative?

The Water Conservation Initiative is the City of Woodland's response to the Governor's request that all urban water agencies reduce their water use by 20 percent. The City of Woodland is asking its residents, commercial and industrial sites, and all public utilities to aid us in reaching the 20 percent reduction goal. More details on the initiative can be found on the City's website on the water conservation pages.

What makes a plant drought tolerant and where can I find more information on plants appropriate for the Woodland area?

A drought-tolerant plant is a plant that can survive periods of time with little or no water. Plant lists appropriate to the Sacramento Valley area are available through the California Native Plant Society, the UC Davis Arboretum, and the Department of Water Resources. Links to plant lists and websites with

information on water-wise landscaping can be found on the City's webpage under Outdoor Water Conservation. In California, WUCOLS (Water Use Classification of Landscape Species) developed by the University of California Cooperative Extension provides information on the water needs of landscape plants.

How is the City working to conserve water?

The City is working to conserve water by:

- Adopting a Master Plan schedule to retrofit city parks with more efficient water conservation technology including weather-based irrigation controllers.
- Installing and testing rain sensors at the cemetery and other City landscape areas.
- Investigating water waste calls and taking corrective action if warranted.
- Posting information on the city web page regarding water conservation and water issues.
- Installing low-flow toilets in City facilities.
- Providing information on water-wise gardening and landscaping.
- Coordinating public education efforts and distributing water-conserving devices. Between January and October 2009, Environmental Services distributed 294 automatic shut-off hose nozzles, 148 low-flow showerheads, 320 moisture meters, 506 kid's activity booklets on water conservation, and 281 Sunset Guides on how to water.
- Providing rebates on water conservation fixtures through Environmental Services. 300 toilet rebates were provided to residents replacing older, high water use toilets with ultra low flush or high efficiency toilets between February and October 2009.

Parks

Why are the Parks being watered during the day?

The answer depends on the park site in question. Parks like Harris, Freeman, Tredway, and City Park run on manual irrigation that has to be turned on during daytime work hours. Some parks have more than sixty valves that need to run at different times. In addition, staff may be testing a valve or fixing broken sprinkler heads.

Why is my local park watered for such a long period of time?

Each park has multiple irrigation stations and sprinkler heads. In order to cover the entire area, multiple stations must be run which can take up to 10 hours. The areas you see being watered are likely different areas of the park on separate irrigation stations. Also, due to staffing issues, one employee may be watering several parks at a time which means traveling between the parks to turn on and off irrigation systems.

Whenever I am out walking near the cemetery it seems like it is always being watered. Why is this?

The Woodland cemetery covers 22 Acres. Approximately 20 Acres are irrigated landscape consisting mainly of turf. In order to get adequate water to the turf areas there are 120 irrigation stations with more than 900 heads. The stations cover a large area with rotary design sprinklers that run an average of 30 minutes each in the hot summer months. Even with multiple stations running it requires 12 - 15 hrs to water the entire facility. Our goal is to complete all watering tasks before the hot afternoon, preferably by 10am.

Currently new sod is being installed in the cemetery. This process will last until sometime in 2011. When new sod is first installed it needs to be watered 2-3 times daily for shorter periods of time to get established. Areas that have been shut off for Interments may sometimes need additional water to catch up for lost coverage. Because of these special circumstances, the water may be on in certain areas during unscheduled times to prevent damage to our new turf.

I saw a sprinkler or valve in a park or median strip that has been running for hours. What should I do?

There may be a valve failure that needs to be repaired. Please call 661-5880 during work hours or 666-8920 during nights and weekends. Give the park site or median, the location of the problem, the length of time the water has been running and your name and phone number in case we need clarification of the problem or location.

There is a broken sprinkler (in a park or median strip) shooting water up in the air, when will it be fixed?

Sprinkler heads are often damaged by equipment or vandalism. If you see any irrigation problems, please report them to the park and recreation department and we will repair the problem as soon as we can. Due to reduced staffing levels we don't have time to check irrigation as often as we have in the past and will respond to issues in order of severity.

Why are water canons used at the Sports Park?

Water canons are used in July and August during high temperatures to cool the artificial turf fields. They use significantly less water than irrigating turf.

Public Works

Why is water main flushing necessary?

Water main flushing is necessary to remove sand and sediment that settles in pipes over time. This accumulation occurs because water moves slowly (at a rate of only 1 and ½ miles per hour) through underground pipes. A build up of bacteria known as "biofilm" can also coat the pipe's inner surface. This combination of sediment and bacteria can restrict water flow in the pipes and contribute to the pipe corroding.

Why do fire hydrants have to be opened for water main flushing?

Flushing uses water force to scour out materials that accumulate in the City's pipes. In order to flush the lines it is necessary to open fire hydrants to create a higher flow velocity. Flushing is necessary for maintenance purposes and will generally improve the water quality. Flushing is not a waste of water because it is necessary to maintain water quality and the integrity of the piping system. All water flows for maintenance are calculated by distance, diameter, and velocity to prevent water wasting and achieve maintenance goals.

What will happen to my water during water main flushing?

Residents in the immediate vicinity of the flushing may notice a slight drop in water pressure, cloudy water from air in the lines or sediment in the water. Try to avoid using water or doing laundry if flushing is occurring nearby. If any sediment or discoloration is noticed, wait until the crew is finished, then run the faucets for a few minutes to clear the house lines. If you have questions regarding water main flushing, call the City of Woodland, Public Works Department at 661-5962.

Why is fire hydrant testing necessary?

Regular fire hydrant testing is necessary to determine how much water is available for fire protection, to detect closed valves in the water system, and to determine what the hydrants capabilities would be in an emergency. In addition to determining fire flows, testing can uncover a number of mechanical problems from valves that don't operate properly to leaks and even pump damaging debris flowing from hydrants. It is imperative that we discover problems and get them repaired before the hydrant is needed in an emergency.

What is valve exercising and why is it necessary?

Valves allow us to isolate small areas and minimize the amount of water services affected with the shut off. In addition to the isolating function of valves, fully open valves in distribution lines reduce flow energy loss and help to reduce pipe corrosion and water quality degradation by eliminating dead ends in pipelines.

Valve exercising is necessary to be sure that all main line valves are in good working order. Valve exercising also allows us to be sure that we have a good “shut down” on an area where we need to perform scheduled or unscheduled maintenance repairs. Most distribution shut off valves fail from lack of operation, not wear. A comprehensive program of inspection, exercising and maintenance can help avoid serious problems when the need to use the valve arises.

Why is pipe flushing and valve exercising required?

California Department of Health Services regulations require periodic flushing of pipeline dead-ends to maintain water quality. This is typically accomplished with blow-off valves (pressure relief valves) at the pipeline dead-end. Unknown dead-ends due to inoperable closed valves are not flushed. The City water lines contain an estimated 8,300 valves, some of which have been found to be either closed or inoperable due to lack of regular maintenance.