

VOICE OF SAN DIEGO

CITY WATER USAGE UP

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

San Diego's city-wide water usage is up 1.5 percent from January 2009, Mayor Jerry Sanders announced today, the first time it's gone up monthly since the city instituted mandatory water restrictions in June. The mayor's response: "The latest numbers are reminder that we can't afford to slack off no matter how well we've done in the past."

City-wide water usage is down 10.5 percent since restrictions came into place.

The city has issued no fines for violating water restrictions, said Alex Ruiz, the city's assistant public utilities director. "By the time we make contact with a customer most of them have complied with the use restrictions in place," Ruiz said. "In those instances where they haven't right before we needed to issue a penalty citation to them, they generally understand the need to save water by that time and they comply."

The city's usage increased 20 to 22 percent compared to last January. Residential use is down 1.5 percent. Commercial use went up 5 percent and irrigation customers went up 5 percent, too. Ruiz attributed the rise in city usage to the Park and Recreation Department, which had new parks and new irrigation systems come online. The city usage data was preliminary and that's the reason there's no hard figure, he added.

The recent rain has helped local reservoirs have higher water levels than they did this time last year.

I asked Sanders about his support for the city's [sewage recycling program](#), given City Council's recent passage of another portion of a pilot for the program. His response:

I support the pilot project. My concern has been and will always be that that water is safe. We're still concerned about the pharmaceutical uses, but I'm certainly not going to quibble with scientists and demagogue this issue. I think that there is some work to be done and I think that we need to find out how it's diluted and how that works in a reservoir system. I think that's important.