

Water lines

News you can use from your Sunnyslope Water District

Winter 2021

New services to help lower your bill P. 4

A quicker and easier way to pay P. 2

Working for lower wastewater fees P. 3

COVID-19 response P. 2



Welcome to your new and improved water district!

As we enter 2021, all of us here at Sunnyslope Water District are charged up and ready to deliver a whole host of new services to you, our customers. We are rededicated to the community we serve, eager to earn your confidence and increase customer satisfaction. Please sign on to our redesigned, easy-to-navigate website at sunnyslopewater.org to take advantage of all the new benefits such as timely leak alerts, online billing history, water-use comparisons, personalized advice to lower your bill, and much more (see article, back page).

We're here to serve you

Since I took the reins as general manager a year ago, I've been increasingly impressed with the skilled and caring Sunnyslope staff who serve our community—truth be told, most of them are your neighbors, using the same district services you are. We want to assure you that despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, we have and will continue to provide safe, reliable, high-quality water service. In fact, I'm happy to report that Sunnyslope Water District has weathered the challenges of 2020 exceptionally well. We remain financially strong, thanks in large part to the five board members you have elected, and their dedication to fiscal responsibility. This has allowed us to provide flexibility to hard-hit community members who have lost income during these difficult times (see article, page two).

We look forward to keeping you informed as we roll out all the improvements planned for this year. When you see us working out in the field, remember that we are your public servants, ready and willing to answer your questions. Please do not hesitate to call us at 637-4670 with your concerns!

Drew Lander, P.E.
General Manager, Sunnyslope Water District



Sunnyslope Water District



Win a \$100 gift card to a local restaurant when you sign up for paperless billing!

Click on the "Manage My Bill" icon at sunnyslopewater.org to enroll, and you'll be



automatically entered to win! Going paperless saves you time and money, helps prevent water rate increases, and reduces your carbon footprint. Turn the page for details!

¿Prefieres tu newsletter en español?

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



Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Watsonville, CA
Permit No. 30

Sunnyslope Water District
3570 Airline Hwy.
Hollister, CA 95023





Dine at an 1880s historical landmark

The family-owned and -operated Inn at Tres Pinos offers fireside outdoor dining, drive-up takeout, and complimentary home delivery. View menus at trespinosinn.com. Let's all support local business during the pandemic!



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 637-4670, day or night! Our on-call staff will return your call immediately.

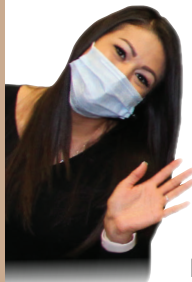
The public is welcome to attend Sunnyslope Water District board meetings, held every third Tuesday of the month at 5:15 pm. To attend remotely via Zoom, please click on our homepage link.

Board of Directors

Jerry Buzzetta, President
James Parker, Vice-president
Mike Alcorn
Judi H. Johnson
Ann C. Ross

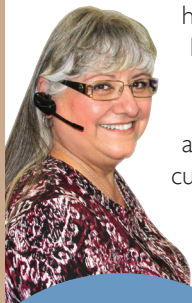
General Manager

Drew Lander



Sunnyslope meets COVID-19 challenges

As the pandemic continues, we want to assure all Sunnyslope Water District customers that our water supply remains safe and reliable. As a water district, our operations have always been designed to eradicate bacteria and viruses, including the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus which causes COVID-19. While our office doors remain closed in accordance with mandated guidelines, we are open for business via phone and email during regular office hours, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.



If you are having financial difficulty, our friendly Customer Account Technicians Melissa, Kelly, and Annabelle are here to help—please call us at 637-4670!

Sign up for paperless billing—and win dinner on us!

Go paperless and you'll automatically be entered to win a \$100 gift card to the local Inn at Tres Pinos restaurant. Regardless, you'll always be a winner with these many paperless benefits:

Access your bill from wherever you are, whenever it's most convenient for you. Pay during a commercial or while waiting at the doctor's office.

No more stamps, envelopes, or check writing. We'll email or text you when your bill is ready to view online, where you can also see previous bills—so no more filing either.

Pay immediately, schedule a payment, or use autopay and never worry about late fees again. With autopay, we'll deduct your bill on the due date, and alert you beforehand. To avoid credit card company fees, pay your bill with your debit card, or directly from your checking or savings account.

Avoid trouble. Paying your bill electronically or by phone is much safer and more secure than writing a paper check.

Do the right thing and get that feel-good vibe: going paperless saves trees, reduces your carbon footprint, and helps keep water bills as low as possible for everyone!

Sign-up is quick and easy. Just visit sunnyslopewater.org and click the "Manage My Bill" icon. If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to call us at 637-4670!



To avoid credit card company fees, pay with your debit card, or directly from your checking or savings account.

Late with your bill? Please call us—we're here to help!

Since the pandemic began in March, we have been working personally with customers who are experiencing financial hardship. Late fees and disconnections for nonpayment have been suspended, and the district is spreading out missed payments up to 12 months depending on individual need.

"We understand that this is a very difficult time for people whose jobs have been impacted by the pandemic," said Drew Lander, Sunnyslope Water District General Manager. "If you have fallen behind on your water bill please contact us so we can come up with a solution that accommodates you."

Once late charges are reinstated post-pandemic, customers who are on payment plans will not have late fees applied as long as they are current. While we wish we could provide financial assistance for those in need, unfortunately we cannot, because funding would have to come out of other customers' pockets. As a special district created by the voting public, we rely solely on user fees to fund our operations.

Currently, the district has deferred approximately \$150,000 in unpaid water bills. Thanks to ongoing tight financial management and postponement of some scheduled maintenance projects, we are able to remain fiscally sound while we work with customers to bring these accounts up-to-date.



How do Sunnyslope fees compare to other water providers?

Approximate monthly water bill comparison

(150 gallons/day; 15,000-gallon monthly total)



City of Santa Cruz	San Jose Water	San Juan Bautista	City of Hollister	Sunnyslope Water District
\$262	\$164	\$151	\$121	\$111

Sunnyslope Water District is a nonprofit agency voted into existence by its ratepayers. Financially, our budget goal is to match revenue to expenses, without making a profit. Your elected board of directors are uncompensated except for a small stipend for expenses, approximately \$350 per month.

Working toward lower wastewater fees

As the nonprofit provider of wastewater treatment for the Ridgemark area, Sunnyslope Water District strives to keep fees as low as possible—but our small client base has always limited our options: a mere 1,300 households must shoulder the cost of operations and maintenance. To remedy this, we have been pursuing a plan which would decrease fees dramatically, as well as benefit the entire community.

Throughout 2020 we have been meeting with representatives of the City of Hollister to pursue the feasibility of taking over operation of the underutilized regional wastewater treatment plant in Hollister, and bringing Sunnyslope customers online there. Once accomplished, the cost of running the plant would be shared by approximately 13,000 households—ten times Sunnyslope's customer base.

Lower rates and more water for recycling

"As a nonprofit agency, we estimate that we could reduce operating costs at the regional plant by \$0.5 million annually compared to the current for-profit management," said Jose J. Rodriguez, Sunnyslope Superintendent for the Ridgemark facility. "This is a fiscally and environmentally sound solution that would reduce Sunnyslope customer fees, and operational costs for all customers through economy of scale."

Another exciting benefit of consolidation is the significant increase in water that would be available for recycling at the Hollister Water Reclamation Facility. This reclaimed water is vital to help recharge our aquifers, irrigate local agricultural fields, and help save potable water.

"Merging Ridgemark with the rest of the city is a win-win for everybody," said Jose. "It would reduce fees, save money, increase water recycling, and provide local, nonprofit management with fiscal transparency and accountability."

Watch your newsletter for updates on this long-term project as it develops.

**Sunnyslope Superintendent
Jose J. Rodriguez checks
operations at the Ridgemark
Wastewater Treatment Facility**



You ask; we answer!



“Why are there City of Hollister charges on my Sunnyslope water bill?”

The Hollister area has two separate agencies that provide potable water to residents: Sunnyslope Water District and the City of Hollister Water Utility. Sunnyslope serves the eastern half of Hollister and the southern neighborhoods of Ridgemark, Oak Creek, and Quail Hollow—about 6,500 households, or half the local population.

The City of Hollister provides water for the remaining residents west of Memorial Drive. The city bills these customers for potable water, sewage treatment, and street cleaning.

If you live in the Sunnyslope area, we bill you for water, and collect sewer and street cleaning fees on behalf of the City of Hollister, who compensates us at-cost. Consolidating the separate bills is an efficiency that saves money on printing, mailing, and staff time. However, if you live in the Ridgemark, Quail Hollow, or Oak Creek neighborhoods, we provide your sewer service (see article at left) so your bill includes Sunnyslope water and sewer charges, but no street cleaning. Yes—it's a bit complicated to understand!

We are happy to answer any and all questions from our customers. Please contact us at billing@sunnyslopewater.org or 637-4670, and your question may appear in our newsletter!



AVOID TROUBLE & SAVE MONEY
Get alerted if your usage is leading to a high bill, or if you have a leak that could cause water damage.

Take control of your water bill!

This is big news! As a Sunnyslope Water District customer, you now have access to our new, state-of-the-art website with free top-shelf amenities to help you save money, time, and hassle!

Save time and dollars with online bill pay, paperless billing, and autopay. See page two for details, including a chance to win a \$100 restaurant gift card!

Never get surprised by a high bill again. Sign up to get an alert when there's a spike in your usage so you can make adjustments to avoid a high bill. Once our new meters go online (see sidebar article) we'll be able to notify you immediately via text, email, or phone message as soon as a spike is detected.

Knowledge is power. Get your conservation score and view sophisticated, easy-to-read graphics that reveal deep insights into your water usage—and how you can save. Compare your consumption with other months and years, view your billing history, and get money-saving suggestions based on your specific household and usage patterns.

Are you paying more or less than others? Compare your water consumption to households with the same number of people and similar yard size.

Receive emergency alerts about outages, boil notices, or scheduled maintenance. Sign up with full confidence that your privacy is protected. Sunnyslope Water District does not share your information with anyone.

Avoid costly water damage in your home. Nobody wants to return from vacation to discover thousands of dollars in water damage. Wherever you are, we can notify you if your account shows constant water consumption.

Pick and chose which services you want. You decide which alerts you want, how often you receive them, and where they should be delivered: via email, text, or phone message.

Your Sunnyslope Water District is committed to improving customer satisfaction and empowering water users to take charge of their personal consumption. Together, we can conserve and protect our community's precious water resources, now and for future generations!

DON'T MISS OUT! Our sleek new customer service platform is loaded with money-saving features. Visit sunnyslopedwater.org to start getting benefits right now—it just takes a few minutes to register with your account number and zip code!



Together we can protect our precious water resources and quality of life.



Sunnyslope Maintenance Operator Adan Cervantes checks water meters via radio transmitter.

Coming soon to a faucet near you: new water meters!

Despite delays due to the pandemic, your Sunnyslope Water District is installing new radio read meters which will be phased in starting this year. The meters will replace our community's old, obsolete models, some of which are over 40 years old and past their useful life.

As the new meters go online, customers will be able to access even more detailed and current information when they visit their Sunnyslope account page. You'll be able to see daily consumption—how watering your garden or doing laundry affected your bill—and we'll be able to send you leak alerts immediately when a spike is detected.

Sign up at sunnyslopedwater.org so you receive all the money-saving benefits as soon as your new meter is activated!

Click "Manage My Bill" at sunnyslopedwater.org to start receiving your benefits now!

