

# Connections



## Recycled Water: A Safe, Valuable and Renewable Resource



**T**he Subregional Water Reuse System, which is managed by the City of Santa Rosa and recycles water for Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol and

Cotati, is Sonoma County's largest producer of high level tertiary treated recycled water.

The Subregional System currently pumps most of its recycled water to the Geysers steamfield where the water is used to produce clean, "green" electricity. Additionally, the Subregional System has successfully used recycled water for agricultural irrigation for more than 30 years and for landscape irrigation since the 1990s.

Recently, you may have heard about trace amounts of pharmaceuticals and "hormone-mimicking" chemical compounds that are not completely removed during the recycled water treatment process. Water quality regulators, the City and the water reuse industry are aware of these trace "microconstituents" that are of emerging interest and concern. The City takes this concern very seriously, proceeding very carefully and doing a great deal of research before embarking on projects that could in any way affect human and/or environmental health.

That is why recycled water is always delivered in a dedicated system, marked by purple pipes and signage, and is constructed/operated according to strict regulatory standards, assuring all of us that recycled water will not be introduced into the potable water system.

Tertiary treated recycled water

meets or exceeds the strict standards for health and safety as set by the California Department of Public Health for beneficial non-potable uses. In fact, tertiary treated recycled water also generally meets drinking water standards though it is not intended or approved for that use.

These microconstituents are present in our environment because humans use drugs, personal care products such as perfume and shampoo, and other products such as pesticides and plastic bottles. Also, many plants, including some food crops, such as soy, produce hormone-mimicking compounds. Research has shown exposure to these compounds from food, air and pharmaceutical products is much greater than from recycled or drinking water.

You can help reduce the quantity of pharmaceuticals entering our waterways by properly disposing your unused drugs at the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency's Household Toxics Facility. The City and the Russian River Watershed Association are also working on ways to make it easier for you to properly dispose of pharmaceuticals through Drug Take Back Programs that are soon to be introduced around the County. If you are unfamiliar with pharmaceutical disposal programs, please visit [NoDrugsDownTheDrain.Org](http://NoDrugsDownTheDrain.Org) for more information.

High quality recycled water is a valuable resource that is approved for very specific uses including some industrial processes and the irrigation of parks, schoolyards, golf courses, residential and commercial landscaping

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## Introducing Two New Water Conservation Rebate Programs

**T**his summer, the City of Santa Rosa Water Conservation Program launched two new rebate programs for Santa Rosa Utilities customers — the High Efficiency Toilet (HET) Rebate program and the Green Exchange Rebate program.

The HET Rebate program offers a rebate of \$150 for replacing high flow toilets, those with a flush volume of 3.5 gallons per flush (gpf) or higher, with an HET, which is a toilet that has a flush volume of 1.28 gpf or less. To participate, you must have a pre-inspection to verify that your toilet is a high-flow toilet. Those who do will be given a list of HETs that qualify for the rebate.

After a qualifying HET has been installed, the high flow toilet must be



recycled at the Sonoma County Central Disposal Site. The

receipt for recycling the toilet must be submitted with the rebate application

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## Water Conservation Tips for Fall

- Remember, when you change clocks for Daylight Savings, change the battery in your irrigation controller too
- As the number of hours of daylight lessens, remember to reduce your irrigation run times

## Your Utilities Department at Work for You Ensuring Our Recycled Water Quality



**W**alter Norosky wanted a job that would combine his love of science with his desire to make a positive impact on our environment and help keep it clean. As a Principal Laboratory Analyst for the Laguna Treatment Plant he gets to do that and more. After earning degrees in Chemistry and Biology, Walter worked for environmental labs in the private sector for 18 years before joining the City of Santa Rosa in 2005. Walter is one of nine analysts who are responsible for performing various chemical and biological tests to ensure the Laguna Treatment Plant's recycled water is meeting permit requirements.

Each lab analyst at the Laguna Treatment Plant has a different specialty. Walter is responsible for analyzing organics, which includes testing for over 130 constituents ranging

from pesticides to vinyl chloride. On a typical day, Walter is preparing samples, testing them, analyzing the data, performing quality control, checking his instruments to make sure they are operating properly, and researching and developing new methods so that the lab can expand the number of analyses they do in-house. In addition to analyzing effluent samples, Walter also does a lot of research on microconstituents, such as pharmaceuticals and personal care products, and assists the Environmental Crimes unit of the Police Department, analyzing various substances that are dumped down storm drains to see if they contain hazardous materials.

Growing up, Walter always liked science and is happy he gets to use his research and problem solving skills to help make the environment a better place. "We receive a lot of support from the City to develop programs that allow us to meet all our current permit regulations and prepare for future regulations. The City does not take its job as a custodian of our water resources lightly." To learn more about the Lab at the Laguna Treatment Plant or to schedule a tour, please call 707-543-3350 or visit the Web site at <http://ci.santa-rosa.ca.us>.

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package in order to receive a rebate as a credit on your utility bill.

The Green Exchange Rebate Program provides rebates of up to \$350 for improving the efficiency of your irrigation hardware and up to \$250 for replacing up to 500 square feet of turf with low water use alternatives. To participate, call the Water Conservation Hotline at 707-543-3985 to schedule an irrigation audit pre-inspection. During the pre-inspection audit, Water Conservation staff will review your irrigation system, review the area of turf that you wish to remove, and provide a list of efficiency improvements for your site that qualify for the rebate. Once your project is approved, you will receive your certificate of participation and can begin making improvements. Upon completion, you must schedule a post inspection within 120 days of your project approval date.

In addition to these rebate programs, the Water Conservation Program offers many incentive programs and services that can help you improve your water use efficiency. For more information on participating in these rebate programs, to determine whether or not you have a high flow toilet, or to request assistance in reducing your water use, please contact the Water Conservation Hotline at 707-543-3985 or visit [www.srcity.org/wc](http://www.srcity.org/wc).

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and food crops. In the U.S. alone, over 22 states use recycled water at more than 1600 sites.

Recycled water is continuously tested to ensure compliance and it is one of the most highly regulated water sources in the nation. Using this water for approved purposes has never been linked with any adverse health effects to children or others.

Santa Rosa is using recycled water for approved applications to benefit the community and the environment in the following ways:

- Increasing recycled water delivery to the Geysers and for irrigation reduces discharge into the Russian River. Santa Rosa is committed to finding alternatives to disposing recycled water in ways that would

least upset the natural balance and minimize impacts to aquatic life such as salmon and steelhead.

- Irrigating with highly treated recycled water provides a drought-proof water supply for irrigation while saving enormous amounts of increasingly scarce potable water for higher uses such as drinking and bathing.
- Providing recycled water to the Geysers steamfield to create up to 150 megawatts of electricity helps reduce our dependence on greenhouse gas-producing fossil fuels.

We invite you to visit the following Web sites to learn more about recycled water and the Subregional Water Reuse System's recycled water programs: [www.WateReuse.org](http://www.WateReuse.org) and [www.SRCity.org/RecycledWater](http://www.SRCity.org/RecycledWater)

### Web Resources

Visit these Web sites to learn more about issues mentioned in this Update.

#### Urban Reuse:

[www.SRCity.org/UrbanReuse](http://www.SRCity.org/UrbanReuse)

#### Recycled Water:

[www.SRCity.org/RecycledWater](http://www.SRCity.org/RecycledWater)

#### Water Conservation:

[www.SRCity.org/WC](http://www.SRCity.org/WC)

#### Incremental Recycled Water Program (IRWP):

[www.SRCity.org/IRWP](http://www.SRCity.org/IRWP)