

May 1, 2015

California Water Services Control Board



Dear Chairperson Felicia Marcus:

Please reduce my water reduction goal in recognition of steps we have already taken to contain our water use, the environmental value of my property which has been developed and nurtured overtime, and the fire risk created by the depth of the proposed cut. **My property is a National Wildlife Foundation Certified Wildlife Habitat and is recognized by many South Bay Audubon Society leaders as unique in its ability to attract and protect rare and threatened species to this area.** It combines coastal habitat with many 60+ year old pine trees, hardwoods, Catalina cherry trees and numerous bird forage areas. As a result we not only have local birds, but also provide homes for birds such as green-tailed towhees, nuthatches and woodpeckers which have lost inland mountain habitat to fire and disease.

For expense and conservation reasons we have been striving for many years to find and implement ways to reduce our water usage at our 4 1/2 acre property which **we have maintained as Bird and Nature Preserve since 1987.** When it was bought, much of the 1 1/2 existing landscaped acres were replanted for wildlife. No trees were cut. At the time, I requested plantings recognized as providing a high benefit to birds and butterflies with as low water requirements as possible. **In recent years we have also established a very prolific monarch butterfly milkweed garden in response to their rapidly declining numbers in the US. We have produced a continuing stream of caterpillars and butterflies 12 months of the year which is not supposed to be possible.** (We also have a few fruit trees and garden plants for our consumption.)

In the past 4-5 years, we have reduced the area that is watered, stopping short of loosing our property's value to the many rare and threatened birds and butterflies which stop here on migration to rest and feed as well as overwinter, and the many who stay to raise their young in the summer. **Our water usage varies dramatically month to month depending on rainfall and temperature because we have from the beginning adjusted water usage to the minimum necessary to maintain the habitat.** Unfortunately for some reason temperatures in our area have been much higher for the past 2-3 years with some winter, spring and most summer days producing heat which normally occurs only in the fall. We have several birdbaths which we hand fill to provide needed water. We put out numerous hummingbird/oriole feeders which we refill several times a day. This allows each pair of birds to raise 2 to 3 broods of babies each summer. We do not provide any fountains or moving water since that would just make water usage worse. **We have implemented numerous water saving steps in and outside the house over the years, including Jerry Brown's no flush every time for the past 2-3 years. (No fun at all!)**

In addition we live in a very high fire danger area as we live in a rural natural habit in Rolling Hills and abut The Palos Verdes Nature Conservancy property which

has no irrigation and thus is very dry. (It also has lost most of its food value for wildlife due to lack of winter/spring rain.)

As a result to try to implement a 36% reduction at this time on top of what we have already accomplished would risk:

- 1. Loss of our home to fire or landslide.**
- 2. Death of our trees and the destruction of valuable wildlife habitat to either disease and/or fire.**
- 3. Hurting reproduction prospects and migration success of many rare birds and butterflies who live on or pass through this property every year.** I realize that this may appear trivial to many people but it is very important to us and to many conservationists.
- 4. A significant increase in our electric and energy consumption especially in high usage periods.** We have reduced our energy consumption dramatically overtime. **With manageable, but increasing discomfort, we been able to avoid using our air conditioning more than 3-6 days a year (and then only for 1- 3 hours in early morning) because shade from our trees keeps the indoor temperature about 10 degrees cooler and closed energy saving windows slows the temperature rise indoors.** Very uncomfortable at times given the significant temperature increases in our area, but not life threatening. **Loosing our trees would change this situation dramatically.**

Palos Verdes as a whole (4 small cities) has also worked actively to try to cut water usage. The Water Company notified us 2-3 years ago that PV cut back its water usage so much more than expected in response to their lowered budget goal that we would have to pay an ongoing surcharge on our water bill. Their explanation has been that the water department's costs are fixed and PV's water consumption has dropped too much to allow them to cover their costs at planned prices.

My specific city, Rolling Hills, is a 100% residential, heavily treed, rural, natural environment, zoned for large lots and very small to moderate-sized homes. Its residents raise their families and most stay for life. If all the trees and vegetation die or is cut down, massive mud or landslides will result in heavy storms, due to its steep hills and canyons and the lack of a deep root system to hold the soil. And our community's environmental value will be destroyed. (In recent years some individual developers have begun to buy a lot in Rolling Hills, cut down everything, destroy the home, and pressure the City to let them build huge houses to sell to the super-wealthy, often from other countries. However this is still rare because the vast majority of us will not sell and strive protect the beautiful community we have created though careful zoning and a focus on nature. For us this is and has always been, our home for life, not a monetary investment.)

Sincerely,

Cathy Nichols, 14 Crest Road West, Rolling Hills, Ca 90274 tel: 310 541 5413