

Outside watering banned in Madera Ranchos

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By Carmen George

Outside water use by Madera Ranchos Water System customers is banned starting Thursday due to the drought.

County officials say the ban, classified as a "Stage 4," is the most restrictive water conservation measure possible. It means only indoor water use is permitted. All outside use -- including watering yards, irrigation and washing cars -- is prohibited.

Officials said the Madera Ranchos Water System is unable to maintain adequate pressure at current levels due to the quickly declining water table, which is affecting the system's three wells.

Private well users aren't affected by the ban, but the county is encouraging them to conserve, too.

Three other unincorporated Madera County communities are also experiencing a Stage 4 ban: Parkwood just south of Madera and Valeta and Fairmead near Chowchilla, said Johannes Hoevertsz, county public works director. Including Madera Ranchos, those bans are affecting around 5,000 residents.

The first Stage 4 ban was implemented in Parkwood nearly two months ago. "There's not one green lawn in the neighborhood" today, Hoevertsz said.

At Stage 4, officials aim to reduce water usage by 25-50%. Besides banning outdoor use, Stage 4 requires that hot tubs and pools only be filled with water transported from outside the service area or maintenance district.

Stage 4 violations cost \$75 the first time, then \$125 and \$175 on subsequent violations.

Residents may call the county's Special Districts Office at (559) 675-7820 to report any water main or service line leaks.

Get water conservation tips at www.saveourh20.org.

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