

# Clovis issues \$125,000 in water fines on June bills

By Marc Benjamin  
mbenjamin@fresnobee.com

Clovis is sending a message to residents and business owners not managing a 36% cut in water consumption required by the state.

For its June billing cycle, the city hit customers with \$125,197 in fines, said Luke Serpa, the city's public utilities director.

Fresno, which is fining customers for watering on wrong days, issued 1,761 citations in June. At \$45 apiece, the fines amounted to \$79,245, up from 1,204 citations and \$54,180 in fines issued in May.

The Clovis citations affect only half of the city's customers, because the other half are on a different two-month billing cycle, Serpa said.

\$79,245

Fresno water consumption fines in June

Altogether, 4,975 fines were levied, Serpa said. Of those, 4,441 were for residential customers, a majority for failing to reach the 36% reduction in consumption, he said.

"The goal," Serpa said, "is to save water, not penalize people."

In June, Clovis reported a reduction of 33%, short of the state requirement that compares 2015 monthly consumption to 2013, he said.

Fresno's water consumption dropped 30% in June and is trending at 27.8% lower for July, spokesman Mark Standriff said. The city is mandated by the state to cut consumption by 28%, he said.

In Clovis, first-time fines for residential users were \$25. Other residential users were fined \$12.50 under a complicated, sliding-scale formula, in which they don't meet the 36% cut but use less than the average household. Average household use changes each month.

Second-offense fines for residential users in Clovis are \$50 per customer and will be charged for future penalties, too.

Included among the residential fines in Clovis were 33 citations for water wasting or watering on the wrong day. The city also issued 499 water waster warnings, Serpa said.

4,975

The number of fines in Clovis for watering violations in June

Overall, 534 fines were issued to commercial and industrial users in Clovis. Those fines could range from \$25 to \$1,000, depending on meter size, Serpa said.

Clovis has a total of 27,000 residential customers.

If the 36% consumption cut for Clovis is difficult to meet now, it will become even more difficult in the winter, Serpa said.

Clovis has a large number of single-family homes and much of the water it uses is for summer landscape irrigation.

When winter comes, customers will have fewer opportunities to cut consumption 36%, he said.

“It will be harder in January than in July when there is a lot of savings to be had,” Serpa said.

The savings could come if rain begins in October and remains steady through the early part of the fall, when water consumption typically remains higher.

Serpa said the city capped 39,000 sprinklers in May and June, and that water savings is not yet fully accounted for.

The goal is to save water, not penalize people

Luke Serpa, public utilities director for Clovis

“We had a very high mandatory cut based on our usage from July through September,” he said. “Our residential per capita use the rest of the year is not far out of line from other cities.”

In the only bit of good news for Clovis water consumers, the city is getting more water allocation through the Fresno Irrigation District because of the unusual spate of spring storms.

The city’s allocation has grown from 5,500 acre-feet in April to 9,293 acre-feet. It allows the city to use less water from its water bank near Kerman at a cost of about \$200 per acre-foot, a savings of about \$500,000. The city had planned to use 3,000 acre-feet of water from the water bank and now only has to use 400. The use of Fresno Irrigation District surface water also will save electricity, lowering pumping costs, and reduce overdraft of its wells.

The city’s normal Fresno Irrigation District allocation is 27,000 acre-feet.

Marc Benjamin: [559-441-6166](tel:559-441-6166), [@beebenjamin](https://twitter.com/beebenjamin)