



## Press Release

For Immediate Release

July 20, 2021

### Stage 4 Water Shortage Emergency Declaration

On July 15, 2021, the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) Board of Directors voted unanimously to declare a Stage 4 Water Shortage Emergency, part of the CCSD's six stage Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP). This declaration was made to encourage the community to reduce consumption in response to low groundwater levels and a projected longer-than-average dry season. Each stage of the WSCP is designed to achieve certain levels of reduction in demand through various water shortage response actions and, in cases of a shortage emergency, water rationing. This press release is being issued to address common areas of confusion in the wake of the emergency declaration.

**The "40%" reduction:** Headlines about the CCSD asking Cambrians to cut their water use by 40% erroneously imply that each individual resident is being asked to reduce their water use by that amount. They seem to say that frugal Cambrians already down to four units per billing period now have to somehow get their usage down to two.

The reality is this: The "Stage 4" shortage response actions adopted by the CCSD Board aim for an *overall* reduction of *up to* 40% from current levels. They are designed to bring usage down sharply among the water users who have been using the most and doing the least to conserve. For users who have been conserving carefully all along, the shortage response actions should not be much of a burden.

**Know your allocation:** The important number for you is not the overall percentage reduction goal, but rather the amount of water you are allocated under Stage 4 restrictions.

Each full-time resident has an allocation of three units per month, or six units per billing period. A household of two residents can use up to 12 units per billing period and not go over its limit.

If you are like most Cambria residents, it's likely that your usage is near or below those levels now. You can find out by looking at your recent water bills, which show your meter readings at the beginning and end of the billing period, along with the number of units consumed.

Commercial accounts will be allocated 3 units per EDU (or fraction thereof) or the average monthly water use in 2019, whichever is less. Commercial account holders should contact the CCSD directly to verify their allocation.

Notes:

A "unit" of water is 100 cubic feet or 748 gallons.

"EDU" stands for Equivalent Dwelling Unit

It's also important to know that the Stage 4 allocations are not mandatory. They are guidelines that you should try to meet, but you will not be penalized for going over them.

The CCSD has included a Permanent Resident Certification Form in the most recent billing as a proactive measure to prepare for mandatory rationing, if needed.

**What to expect in Stage 5:** Hopefully, Cambria's response to the Stage 4 declaration – including conservation by commercial users and vacation rentals – will be enough to get the CCSD through the dry season without further restrictions. But if well levels and other indicators require more action, the CCSD is ready with Stage 5.

Moving to Stage 5 would trigger at least two significant actions. One is the operation of the Water Reclamation Facility (WRF), previously known as the Sustainable Water Facility. The other is mandatory caps on water use, backed by penalties for exceeding water use allocations.

Why wait this long to start up the WRF? The answer is that it is governed by an emergency permit that allows it to operate only when water use is sharply restricted, as in Stage 5. This rule will stay in effect until the Coastal Commission gives final approval to a regular permit that allows the WRF to operate under a wider range of conditions.

The good news is that the WRF is being prepared right now for operation, in case a Stage 5 declaration is necessary.

The other important part of Stage 5 is that its limits on water use will be tighter and no longer voluntary. For permanent residents, the allocation will go down to two units per person per month, or four units in a billing period. So, a household of two permanent residents will have to stay within eight units in a two-month billing period. Commercial accounts will go down to 2 units per EDU or 75% of their 2019 average monthly water use, whichever is less.

A penalty will be levied on all water use in excess of the maximum water use allocation. Water use that exceeds the maximum water use allocation by less than 25% shall be subject to a five hundred percent (500%) penalty surcharge levied on all usage above the customer's monthly unit allocation. Water use that exceeds the maximum water use allocation by more than 25% shall be subject to a one thousand percent (1,000%) penalty surcharge levied on all usage above the customer's monthly unit allocation.

These rules are similar to those imposed during the drought years of 2014 and 2015. Cambria met the challenge back then and the CCSD Board of Directors and staff believe we can meet the challenge again now.

Visit us online for more information about water conservation and Stage 4 shortage response actions at [www.cambriacsd.org/water-conservation](http://www.cambriacsd.org/water-conservation).

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