

Laguna Beach County Water District

Beginning January 1, 2011, the District is implementing a Tiered Rate Structure based on property specific **Water Budgets**. Tiered rates provide customers with an economic incentive to use water efficiently and pass on the higher costs associated with conservation programs and development of supplemental water sources to those who use water inefficiently.

What are Water Budgets?

Water budgets promote efficient water use by providing enough water for typical, yet efficient, water use indoors and outdoors without penalty. Budgets are property specific and take into account different water use factors depending on whether you have a single-family, multi-family, commercial/industrial/institutional, mixed use, or irrigation-only water account. Since approximately 60 percent of a typical customer's water use is for irrigation, the water budget focuses on weather and irrigation data, allowing more water in the summer months.

Water budgets allow you to decide how to use your budgeted water. If you want to use more water for a flower garden, you might consider areas of your yard where you can cut back or you might make sure to have water-efficient appliances and implement water-saving practices for your family. Water budgets are about choice. As long as you're not over watering or wasting water in other ways, you should have plenty of water for your indoor needs and to maintain a healthy landscape.

Water budgets enable the District to reduce water demand quickly in the case of unexpected water shortages. For example, if the District were to experience a prolonged infrastructure emergency, such as a water main break, imposing watering restrictions would be a last resort. Instead, the District would lower water budgets and let you determine how to use your budgeted water allotment.

HOW YOUR WATER BUDGET IS CALCULATED

Your Water Budget is the amount of water your household or business requires each two-month billing period. The factors used to calculate your water budget depend on the type of service account you have with the District. Below is a description of how the District developed Water Budgets for its various accounts.

Single-Family Residential Account (SFR)

Single-family Residential Accounts (SFR) include all customers that receive water through their own meter. Condominiums and duplexes are considered SFR accounts if each unit receives water through a separate meter. Water Budgets for single-family residential accounts include enough water for efficient indoor and outdoor use and are based on the following factors.

Indoor Water Use Factors

- **Water use per person, per day.** A 1997 American Water Works Association study showed that on average, a person uses about 60 gallons of water each day indoors. This number includes all indoor water use, such as showers and washing clothes, and is based on water efficient devices.
- **Number of people in the household.** The 2000 Census states that there are 2.1 people per household in the city of Laguna Beach. The District is allocating enough water for 3 people per single-family home.
- **Number of days per billing cycle.** Number of days, approximately 60, that you are being billed for service.

Outdoor Water Use Factors

- **Landscaped area.** The landscaped area is the amount of area on the property that is being irrigated. Pools and spas are also included in the landscaped area. County Assessor parcel data and Geographic Information System data (GIS) obtained from the City were used to determine the landscape area for your home.
- **Evapotranspiration.** The amount of water that is lost by soil each day due to evaporation and plant transpiration. For your

water budget, historical rain data has been used.

- **Plant factor.** The plant factor is the amount of irrigation water required by a plant. Plant factors vary by the type of plant. For example, turf grasses have a plant factor between 0.6 to 0.8, while water efficient plants have a plant factor of only 0.3 to 0.4. Your allocation is calculated using a plant factor of 0.8.
- **Irrigation efficiency.** Irrigation efficiency measures how efficiently your irrigation system operates. Ideally, all irrigation systems would be 100 percent efficient. In reality, most systems have an irrigation efficiency factor of about 0.7. Your allocation is calculated using an efficiency factor of 0.7.

Multi-Family Accounts (MFR)

Water Budgets for single meter Multi-family accounts (more than one family sharing one water meter) are based on a 3-year rolling historical average for each meter.

Commercial/Dual Use/Schools/Other Accounts

Each business is unique and has water needs based on factors such as the type of business, number of employees, and the use of water for conducting business. Businesses are allocated water based on a 3-year rolling historical water use average.

Hotel Accounts

Hotel/Motel accounts are allotted water based on the number of guest rooms. The District is allocating 144 gallons per room based on a comprehensive study conducted by the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, which found that a typical hotel utilizes 144 gallons of water per day for typical hotel use.

Irrigation Accounts

Water budgets for Irrigation only accounts are set according to the property's total square footage of irrigated area, evapotranspiration rate, plant factor, and irrigation efficiency.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What if I use more water than my budgeted amount?

If your water usage is within your water budget, you will be billed at the **Tier 1** rate. If you exceed your budget, you will be charged a higher **Tier 2** rate for each unit you are over. Based on current water use, approximately 80 percent of all District customers are already within their water budget.

Will unused allotments be rolled over?

No. This concept is called “water budget banking.” The use of banking dilutes the water conservation advantages of the rate structure. For example, if a wet period leads to water savings, it would not help if customers were encouraged to spend those extra savings later in the year through a water budget banking program.

Will I be able to request changes to my water budget?

Yes. Considerations will be made for circumstances such as large families, irrigated area, home daycare facilities, etc. A **Variance Request Form** must be completed to receive an adjustment. Forms will be available on our web site or for pick up at our office.

What if my historical use does not represent current use?

Multi-family, mixed use, and commercial/industrial/institutional accounts can request a review of their historical water use if there has been a significant change in how water is used on the property. This could include a change in the type of business being conducted on the property, ie. retail store is now a bar.

How does this differ from the current rate structure?

The District’s current rate structure consists of two tiers for single-family residential customers. Water use of 30 units or less is billed at a Tier 1 rate. Usage over 30 units is billed at a higher Tier 2 rate. Tier 1 is based on data that shows the average household in the District’s service area uses approximately 30 units or less per two-month billing period. All other accounts pay a single flat rate with the current rate structure.

Why is the Tier 2 rate higher than Tier 1?

The **Tier 2** rate recognizes that there are increased costs, primarily in the development of additional water resources and water use efficiency efforts related to higher levels of usage. Funds generated through Tier 2 cover 100 percent of the District’s water use efficiency efforts and a small portion of the cost of developing a supplemental water source.

What if I am irrigating multiple parcels through one meter?

Water Budgets for single-family residences are created using County Assessor parcel data and Geographic Information System data (GIS) obtained from the City. If one water meter is irrigating multiple parcels, you will need to complete a variance request form to add the additional parcels to your water budget.

Will budgets be increased for swimming pools?

No. The use of water for a pool is a choice made by the customer. Adjustments to fill a pool from empty will be granted every 5 years.

Is there a lifeline tier for seniors or low-income families?

No. The District is prohibited under State law (Proposition 218) to charge less for water service to one group over any other group.

Why do you use historical rainfall data rather than actual?

Rainfall occurs in realtime and can not be included in a budget developed in advance. Your water budget is based on historic weather patterns, including rainfall and are established to provide for the basic needs of turf.

What can I do to reduce my water use now?

The District has a Water Use Efficiency (WUE) program designed to help you stay within your water budget. Visit www.lagunabeachwater.com for conservation tips and rebate information. Or contact the District’s WUE department at (949) 342-1437 to sign up for a free Waterwise House Call.

Additional Questions?

If you still have questions regarding the District’s new **Budget-based Tiered Rate Structure** or have questions regarding your budget, please contact our customer service department at 949-494-1041.

Laguna Beach County Water District

Application for Review of Water Budget

This form is to request an increased water budget under the District's water budget-based tiered rate structure. If you believe you need an increased allocation based on the criteria listed below, please complete and return this form in its entirety. Variances may be approved for any of the following reasons and are subject to periodic review.

Name on Account: _____ Account Number: _____

Water Service Address: _____ Parcel Number: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I request an increased water budget for the following reason(s). Check all that apply:

- 1. More than three (3) Full-Time Residents in Household:** Total number of residents in household: _____ You may be required to submit documentation for each person to substantiate claim if necessary.
- 2. Licensed Child or Adult Day Care Facility (in a residential unit):** Number of persons currently cared for: _____
Submit a copy of a valid Family Child Care Home or Adult Day Care license issued by the California Department of Social Services.
- 3. Irrigated Landscape Area Greater than District Estimate:** Total landscape area (sq.ft.) _____ Please submit a property sketch with dimensions on 8.5" x 11" paper.
- 4. Multiple parcels served by one meter:** Estimated total landscape area (sq.ft.) _____ List Parcel Numbers served by meter: _____
- 5. Pool Filled from Empty (One time adjustment calculated at the Tier 1 rate granted every 5 years):** Date Filled: _____
Total Capacity of Pool (gallons): _____ Length: _____ Width: _____ Average Depth: _____
- 6. Medical Needs:** Estimated gallons per day required: _____ (Please submit verifiable medical documentation.)
- 7. Leak:** Date leak fixed: _____ If you have a significant water leak at your property, an adjustment may be considered. Please submit documentation of leak fix. (ie. before/after photographs, receipt for plumbing repair, etc.)
- 8. Historical Water Use used to Calculate my Water Budget has Changed:** (Applies only to Multi-family, Dual Use, Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Accounts. District staff will contact you within 15 business days.)
- 9. Other Circumstance:** There may be instances where an increased allocation may be appropriate. If you believe that is the case, please provide details in the space below and attach any available documentation. Use reverse side if necessary.

Once approved and processed, variances will be applied to future billings. You will be notified in writing or by phone if your request has been approved. Please allow 30 days to process your variance request. Unsigned applications are automatically denied.

I declare, under penalty of perjury, that I am the above account holder and the information contained herein, including supporting documentation, is complete and accurate. I further understand that all variances are subject to verification and I may be liable for back charges if I provide incorrect information. Knowingly providing false or misleading information for purposes of receiving a variance may be subject to civil and criminal penalties.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mail your completed application to: Atten: Water Budget Variance Request
Laguna Beach County Water District
P.O. Box987
Laguna Beach CA, 92652

| For District Use Only | |
|--|------------|
| Received _____ | Date _____ |
| Approve <input type="checkbox"/> Denied <input type="checkbox"/> | Date _____ |
| Additional units per billing period _____ | |