



WOODSIDE PORTOLA VALLEY SHARON HEIGHTS
LADERA STANFORD HILLS SKYLINE portions of
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The burning sun scorches the pocket book

As the summer sun burns relentlessly on, people are beginning to notice the drought not only in thirsty gardens and parched hillsides, but where it really hurts—in the pocketbooks.

Local water offices are deluged under a flood, not of water but of protests about surcharges for excess water use. Customers of the Menlo Park Water Department and the California Water Service Company will see new rate increases in their next bills.

Meanwhile out of San Francisco are coming the first rumblings about preparing for new water cutbacks of 40 to 50 per cent if rains do not start earlier and harder than last year.

At an August meeting of the Bay Area Water Users Association—the organization of agencies that retail San Francisco water to consumers in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda counties—Gene Kelleher, Assistant Manager of San Francisco Water Department warned them to begin working on a plan “so that if we go further into rationing, they will be prepared.” It is too soon to tell whether early rains and snow

pack can improve the department’s water supplies, Mr. Kelleher said, but it will be necessary to start planning by December so that plans can be presented in January and implemented in February in case of another dry year. He suggested that further cuts may be made on a per capita basis rather than the flat 25 per cent cutback being imposed this year, “and irrigation will be the first to go.”

So far local water agencies show overall reductions in water use very close to the amount of increased rationing which may be imposed next year. The Menlo Park Water Department which serves Belle Haven, central Menlo Park and Sharon Heights reports a 35.86 per cent reduction in water use for August. This is down from earlier savings of 42.4 per cent in July, 48 per cent in June, and 44.5 per cent in May, according to Pat Neal of the city engineering department. Water savings for the Sharon Heights meter ran somewhat behind the whole service area, with savings of 29.5 per cent for August, 40.9 per cent for July, 42.8 per cent for June, and 30.5 per cent for May. Mrs. Neal ascribed the difference primarily to landscape watering in Sharon Heights where lots are larger, hilly, and subject to soil problems.

August savings of 20 per cent were racked up by the California Water Service Company’s Bear Gulch District, serving Woodside, Portola Valley, Atherton, and parts of Menlo Park, according to representative Clay Scofield. July savings were 40 per cent. The lower savings rate for August may be partially explained by the fact that last year it rained in August, Mr. Scofield noted.

Water saving kits are still available at the company’s district office at 1127 Chestnut Street in downtown Menlo Park.

by Marion Softky



Surcharges bring howls of protest

Hundreds of phone calls are flooding local water offices as surcharges for excess summer watering hit consumer water bills.

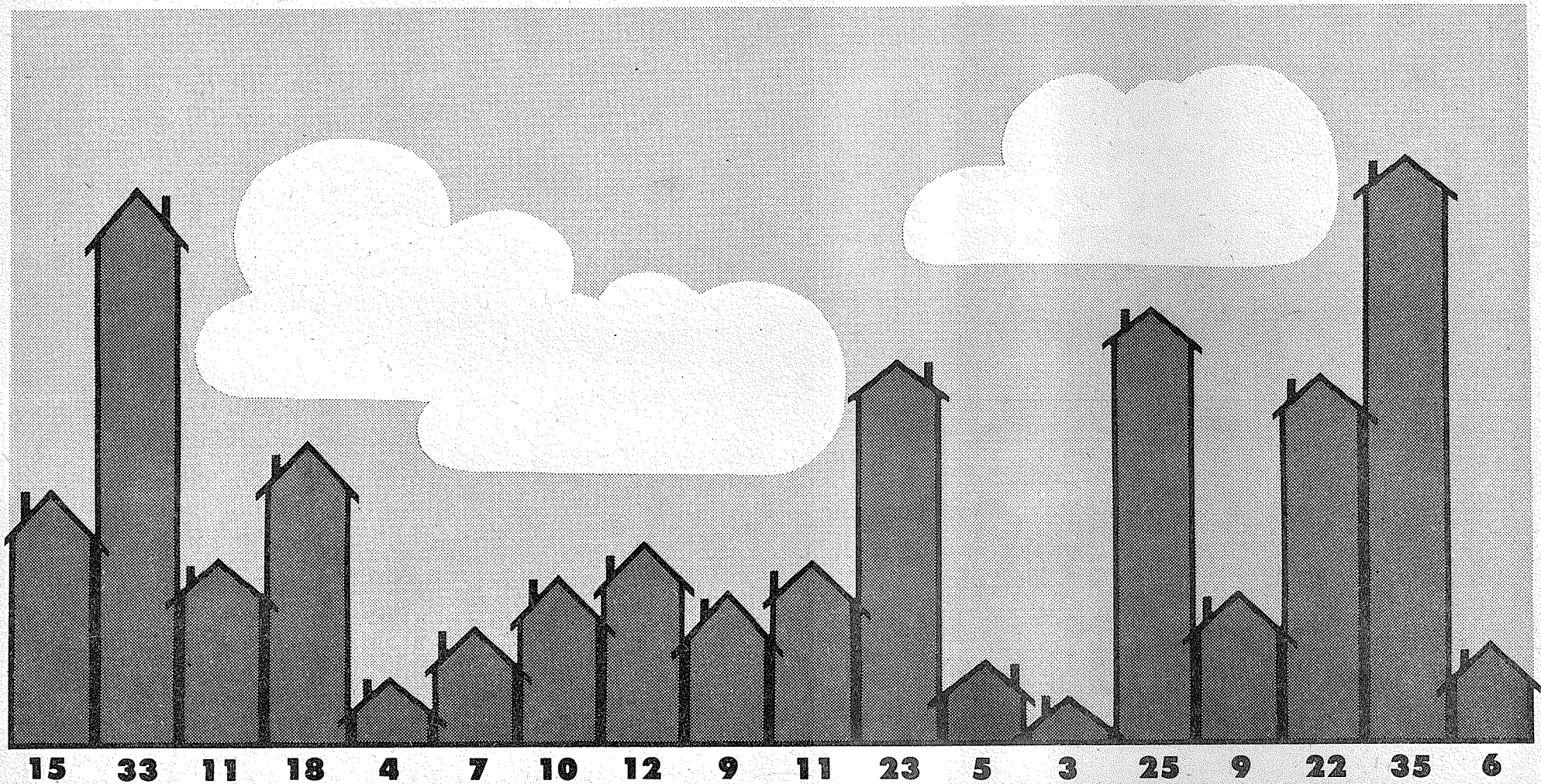
“I’ve just spent days on the phone. I feel as if I have talked to everyone individually,” commented Mrs. Pat Neal, an engineering assistant for the city of Menlo Park. And over at the California Water Service office they have had to add three employees to handle the extra workload due to rationing.

The surcharges of \$2 per 100 cubic feet over the water allotment started hitting the bills of customers of the Menlo Park Water Department and the California Water Service Company in July, and the phone has not stopped ringing since as people call to protest their excess charges.

Menlo Park water department customers have been hit particularly hard since their rationing ordinance includes a flat upper limit of 30 units per month in addition to a 25 per cent cutback over the same billing period last year for all water use between five and 30 units. (One unit of water equals 100 cubic feet which equals 748 gallons.) Customers of the California Water Service Company are only required to cut back 25 per cent with no upper limit and are charged extra for only the water used over their allotment.

Because so many users of Menlo Park
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How one group of neighbors uses water



How do neighbors use water?...These houses show how much water a set of Ladera neighbors used. The figures show monthly water use taken off a randomly selected page of computer printout in the

files of the California Water Service Company. For example, a pour-the-shower-water-on-the-plants conserver used three units (2244 gallons) of water during one month, while a neighbor with lots of lawn

and thirsty plants used almost 12 times as much—35 units or 26,180 gallons. Why do they differ so much?...“There’s no rhyme or reason,” commented a local

water official. What will happen if the drought continues and rationing gets stricter?...Something will have to give.



SERVING ON STUDENT BOARDS at Menlo-Atherton High School will be the following commissioners—bottom from left, Andy Rogers, ways and means; Diane Tabellija, human relations; Terri Miller, spirit; Chrissie Smith, publicity; Diane

Shevell, class boards; in back, Libby Carlson, athletics; Curielle Heisler, social board; Stephanie Bremond, social board.

Surcharges bring howls of protest

Continued from page 1
 water were not aware of the 30 unit upper limit, the department is cancelling all penalty charges for July, and crediting them on the next bill for those who have already paid. The council added the 30 unit

upper limit at the April public hearing on the proposed rationing ordinance after citizens protested that a flat 25 per cent cutback would penalize those who were already conserving. Although the change was publicized in newspapers, no formal

notice was sent to all water users. An insert in the city water bill mailed Sept. 2 explains the situation and includes a complete copy of the rationing ordinance.

Penalty charges—later cancelled—went to 739 customers out of the 3650 meters

maintained by the Menlo Park Water Department, according to Mrs. Neal. She noted that she had received about 35 applications for exceptions before the July billing—now she has hundreds.

California Water Service has no overall figures but Mr. Scofield noted that in Ladera there were about 70 surcharges out of 420 accounts. People who have a problem with their allocation are invited to write or call the company office, Mr. Scofield said.

The protests over surcharges highlight startling differences in patterns of individual water use and different philosophies about rationing as well as specific circumstances—such as a vacation last summer. For example, a resident of Ladera complained that she was conserving last year and, as a result, received a \$2 penalty for using only nine units of water—while neighbors were pouring many times that much on their landscaping.

A Sharon Heights resident who had cut back 66 per cent from 116 to 39 units protested the \$18 surcharge imposed for exceeding the city's flat upper limit of 30 units per household per month.

This ceiling was imposed by the council after residents protested that the proposed flat 25 per cent cutback penalized people who conserved. In contrast, the California Water Service Company imposes a 25 per cent cutback for all residential water use with no upper limit. Both agencies require no cutback for people using five units or less and charge \$2 a unit for water used in excess of the allotment.

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