

Annual Newsletter

JANUARY 2016

Twain Harte Community Services District

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2015 in Review

Operating in emergency conditions is beginning to seem normal in California and in Twain Harte. As if historical drought wasn't enough, 2015 brought us new emergencies for wildfire and dead trees.

Our "normal" involved increased focus on water conservation (we saved 42%), new wells, slash removal (we removed 1,600 cubic yards), adopting defensible space rules for vacant lots and assisting our Calaveras neighbors with Butte Fire response - we sent firefighters and our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Thank you. We are proud to serve you.

Our community certainly felt the impacts of these emergencies and, once again, responded "normally" by coming together to support each other and our neighbors. Thank you for your support in 2015.

Drought Update

After experiencing the four driest consecutive years in California's recorded history, the recent rain and snow storms seem torrential. In actuality, these storms have

resulted in only slightly higher than normal precipitation for our area. According to the National Weather Service, who still classifies our area as "Exceptional Drought", we need significantly higher than normal rainfall to get out of the drought.



California's major reservoirs are only about half of their normal levels for this time of year. This can be clearly seen by visiting New Melones Reservoir. It is estimated that we will need about 2½ times more water this year than last year just to keep New Melones from dropping even lower next year.

The good news is that El Niño is anticipated to keep rainfall levels at or above normal for the rest of the year and the snowpack, which supplies about 30% of California's water, is 16% above normal. These conditions and predictions indicate that our community should have enough water for 2016, but we will

still need to conserve. Widespread dry wells, low reservoir levels, and high risk fire conditions will likely result in continuation of the State Water Board's 25% conservation mandate through October 2016.

Dealing with Dead Trees

Whether in your yard or on the hills, dead trees are everywhere. Cal Fire estimates over 29 million trees have died in California due to bark beetles and drought. It started with small, weak trees; now larger pines 130-foot tall and 4-feet in diameter have died, often in large groves.

Dead trees pose risks to our homes and community. The dead needles increase fire danger that already resulted in devastating wildfires last summer. Furthermore, as the trees degrade over the next few years, they will become falling hazards.

In December we declared a state of emergency due to excessive dead trees and joined the Tuolumne County Tree Mortality Task Force. We applied for a grant to cover 75% of the costs to remove dead trees that threaten water and sewer facilities.



SEEKING EXCELLENCE

As a community services district, we take pride in being the closest and most personal form of government. We strive for excellence in our fire, water, sewer and park services and want to make sure they best fit Twain Harte's unique needs.

Please let us know how we're doing by taking the survey on the back of this sheet or on our website.

VISIT, CALL OR EMAIL US:

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Our Mission:

To provide quality and efficient services to our community in a professional, reliable and fiscally responsible manner.

Although this funding is for public facility protection only, it may cover tree removal on private property.

Current Projects

Bocce Courts

You may have noticed that the sign at Eproson Park has been moved. This is the first step of constructing two new bocce courts where the sign used to be located. The sign will be restored and the new courts will add a fun family activity to our park this summer.

Operations Center

Nearly ten years ago, our board dreamt of building an operations facility that would house all District services (fire, water, sewer, park) under one roof and would meet the shared operational needs of each service. The District purchased the old Twain Harte Inn property as the location, but the dream died when estimates came in at \$6 million.

We are pleased to report that we found a way to meet the shared needs for less than one-tenth of the original cost. Even better, most of the costs are covered by the recent sale of the old Inn property and the remaining costs will be covered by the future sale of our existing administration building.

The operations center will consist of a repurposed building and two vacant lots on Vantage Point Drive. It will provide a safety facility for decontamination of our firefighters

and sewer workers when they come in contact with bloodborne pathogens and other hazardous materials, a training center and live burn facility to best train our local firefighters and CERT team to be prepared for the real thing, an operations and command center for community emergencies, District offices, and an equipment storage yard to provide safe winter access to emergency sewer trailers that stop sewer spills (workers cannot safely pull heavy trailers down the existing steep, narrow storage area access roads in icy conditions).



Training at new live burn facility

New Wells

Our new well near the park ran great all year, providing about 10% of our water in 2015. We are now nearly finished with the first of two more wells that will bring even more water supply reliability to our community. The newest well, near Shadybrook Reservoir, produces almost twice as much as the park well (about 75 gallons/minute or 60% of normal winter use) and is anticipated to be online in March. The final well location is yet to be finalized. The two new wells are funded by a \$700,000 grant.



New well building and filter

Water & Sewer Rates

We have been working hard over the past two years to accomplish our mission to provide quality services in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner. By making operational changes and cost cuts, we saved an average of about \$93,000 per year (\$4.65/month per bill) in water expenses and \$43,000 per year (\$2.25/month per bill) in sewer expenses. Our employees also agreed to forego annual raises and to pay more toward retirement, saving an average of \$68,000 per year (\$3.40/month per bill) in water and \$38,000 per year (\$2.00/month per bill) in sewer over the life of the three year labor contract. We also obtained \$1,145,000 in grants.

These savings have delayed rate increases, but with substantial TUD increases, aging pipelines and facilities, the need for better fire protection and other increasing costs, our projected revenues will not cover our expenses in coming years. It is time to look at rates.

Please come to our February 11th board meeting at 9:00 a.m. to learn more and provide your input.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

PLEASE RATE OUR FIRE, WATER, SEWER & PARK SERVICES:

1 – Very Poor 2 – Poor 3 – Decent 4 – Good 5 – Excellent ? – Not Sure

Competence and Professionalism:

Field staff- water/sewer/fire/park

1 2 3 4 5 ?

Office staff

1 2 3 4 5 ?

Efficiency of Operations:

1 2 3 4 5 ?

Reliability of Services:

1 2 3 4 5 ?

Financial Responsibility:

1 2 3 4 5 ?

Are you happy with our services?

Yes No

Explanations or ways we can improve:

PLEASE RETURN BY MARCH 1, 2016:
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