Santa Cruz residents using least water in state

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SANTA CRUZ >> Santa Cruz's tough water restrictions are paying off.

With the lowest water use per capita, the city is doing the best job at conserving water in the state, according to the State Water Resources Control Board report released this week. The report lists which cities are doing well at saving water and which are not.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency in January, calling for Californians to reduce water use 20 percent.

In May, Santa Cruz called for a 25 percent reduction, or a limit of 60 gallons per day, per person. Residents have been meeting or exceeding that goal almost from the start.

The report figures show that Santa Cruz's residential water use is 44.9 gallons per person a day compared to 63.4 at the same time last year.

"Obviously our customers reduced their use beyond the requested amount," said Water District Director Rosemary Menard.

In second place, San Francisco residents use 46 gallons a day. However, the Bay Area averages 84 gallons per person on a daily basis. In Monterey, water use is also low at 49 gallons.

Residents use 81 gallons in Scotts Valley and 97 gallons per day in Watsonville.

The Colorado River area, which includes San Bernardino, averages on the high end of 251.9 gallons.

Despite Santa Cruz's water restrictions, people voluntarily have pitched in to reduce their water usage, Menard said. For example, conservation signs on brown lawns are en vogue.

"It really has been a community effort," she said. "We've had tremendous compliance."

The State Water Resources Control Board also reported that the statewide conservation rate backslid in September after three months of improvement, to 10.3 percent from 11.6 percent in August.

The board is collecting residential water use data to better direct conservation efforts locally as the punishing drought continues.

Santa Cruz's Water Department needs to see a foot of rain in the watershed by the end of the year to consider taking a break from rationing.

Cities with Lowest per capita water use

The figures below show the gallons used per person, per day in 2014 and 2013.

Santa Cruz: 44.9, 63.4