



Dear Benicia Resident,

February 19, 2016

We are writing to update residents about Benicia's water infrastructure improvement and conservation efforts. As you may know, earlier this year a Solano County Grand Jury Report found that all County cities, including Benicia, experienced unnecessary water loss due to aging, leaking infrastructure.

To date, Benicia has addressed over 80 leaks per year in our pipelines, strengthened our Emergency Response Plan with critical sewer line repairs and debris removal, and reduced water consumption by up to 43% -- well beyond the State mandate, thanks to the community's conservation efforts.

Despite these actions, the fact remains that Benicia has an aging water and sewer system that is nearly 80 years old.

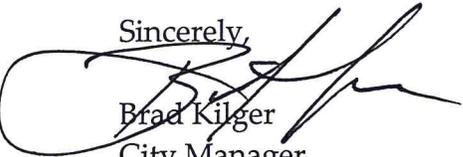
All Solano County cities have old, deteriorating water and sewer infrastructure, which include outdated pipes that continue to jeopardize conservation efforts, the environment and public safety. Both our water and sewer systems are critical to our community's continued water conservation leadership, safety and water reliability.

Benicia gets nearly 85% percent of its water from the State Water Project. As we now know, there is no guarantee whatsoever that Benicia residents will continue to receive the water the State previously agreed to supply. In 2014, the City was forced to purchase water at a cost of \$900,000. We must be able to increase the reliability of our own local water supply and be self-sufficient.

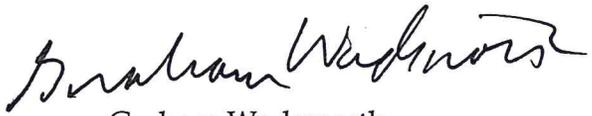
Ongoing preventative maintenance and upgraded infrastructure cannot be further delayed or deferred for the health, safety and financial risks to our community amid new requirements to conserve water and increase public health and safety.

On **March 1, 2016**, City Staff will introduce a Water/Wastewater Rate Study to the City Council, as part of the steps the City is taking to continue the community's conservation efforts, safety, and water reliability. For more information, visit [www.ci.benicia.ca.us](http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us) or call 707-746-4200. We have also enclosed frequently asked questions about Benicia's Water and Wastewater Systems.

Sincerely,

  
Brad Kilger  
City Manager

  
Jim Lyon  
Fire Chief

  
Graham Wadsworth  
Public Works Director

ELIZABETH PATTERSON, *Mayor*  
Members of the City Council  
MARK C. HUGHES, *Vice Mayor* . ALAN M. SCHWARTZMAN . TOM CAMPBELL . CHRISTINA STRAWBRIDGE

BRAD KILGER, *City Manager*  
KENNETH C. PAULK, *City Treasurer*  
LISA WOLFE, *City Clerk*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Benicia's Water and Wastewater Infrastructure and Conservation Efforts

**Q: What is the issue?**

A: As you know, despite the recent rain, California is still in a severe, years-long drought. Benicia residents have been California leaders in water conservation, reducing water consumption by up to 43%. We must continue to upgrade our aging water infrastructure and implement current technologies that empower our local water consumers to conserve even more.

**Q: How can the Benicia community continue to save water?**

A: We have more work to do to further water conservation efforts, including repairing leaks and using modern, accurate reading meters. The City is currently completing its audit of current leaks, deteriorating pipes, and aging infrastructure in our local water system. Addressing these issues are essential to maintaining our water conservation efforts, safe drinking water and our environment.

**Q: Is Benicia's water and wastewater infrastructure safe?**

A: All cities in Solano County have old, deteriorating water infrastructure that continues to jeopardize conservation efforts, the environment and public safety services. Significant segments of Benicia's water and sewer pipes are nearly 80 years old, include outdated pipes, and have aging monitoring equipment that must be upgraded for safety.

We must ensure a secure, adequate water supply in the event of an earthquake, fire or catastrophic emergency and mitigate leaks and sewage spills that can pollute the Carquinez Strait, Suisun Marsh, and San Francisco Bay.

**Q: What has the City done to address these issues?**

A: While the City continues to practice fiscal prudence, to date, we are only in the position of focusing on the most critical maintenance needs necessary for community health and safety. Benicia must also meet continually changing Federal and State Water Quality standards and requirements to avoid costly fines, conserve water and protect public health. Even with these ongoing efforts, our aging infrastructure still needs significant upgrades that we cannot address.



**Q: Will water conservation efforts and infrastructure upgrades affect water and sewer rates?**

A: Benicia is undergoing a citywide rate study to determine changes in water usage and consumer needs amid this historic drought and beyond. In partnership with the community and to minimize the impact on residents, only projects absolutely necessary for continued safe service have been addressed over the last several years. Existing funds have not allowed the City to address preventive maintenance and urgent capital needs, which cannot be further deferred or delayed. The City will continue to update the community about effects on rates.

**Q: How can I learn more?**

A: The introduction of the City's Water/Wastewater Rate Study will be presented to the City Council on March 1<sup>st</sup>, and then a public hearing is planned for April 5<sup>th</sup>. Please check the City's website at [www.ci.benicia.ca.us](http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us) for additional information, or call (707) 746-4200.