



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS

Water Restrictions Q&A

Updated December 18, 2007

Mandatory Water Conservation Measures [Level 1]

Council's mandatory water conservation measures [Level 1] have been in place since 1st June 2004. For more information about water conservation measures please review the details below or contact Port Macquarie-Hastings Council on 6581 8111.

1. What are the mandatory water conservation measures (Level 1)?

The following mandatory water conservation measures have applied from 1st June 2004 for all water supplied from Council's reticulated water supply system:

1. WATERING GARDENS & LAWNS

- Watering of gardens only on "Odds & Evens" days matching house number.
- [No garden watering on 31st day of the month].
- Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle¹.
- No hoses, sprinklers or watering systems can be used between **10am to 4pm**.
- Watering cans and buckets can be used at any time.
- Applies to all homes, private and public gardens and sports grounds.
- No restriction on commercial market gardens and plant nurseries.

2. CLEANING VEHICLES, HOUSES, BOATS & OUTBOARD MOTORS

- Allowed on any day of the week at any time, on lawn area where possible.
- Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle¹.
- Applies to both private and commercial use.

3. CLEANING DRIVEWAYS, PATHS & HARDSTAND AREAS

- Brooms, vacuum cleaners or air blowers to be used to remove loose material.
- No chemicals or cleaning products to be used.
- No hose can be used, unless:
 - Required as a result of accident, fire, health hazard or other emergency, or
 - An approved water efficient nozzle [less than 9 litres per minute] or high-pressure cleaner unit, fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle is used².

4. COMMERCIAL, BUILDING & LANDSCAPING INDUSTRIES.

- Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle¹.
- Watering systems cannot be used between **10am to 4pm**.
- Dust suppression permitted with recycled water only.

All water usage and associated activities must not cause pollution as defined under the Protection of the Environment Operations [POEO] Act 1997.

Note: 1 See Answer 4, for examples of hose fittings including water cut-off trigger nozzles and control nozzles.

2 See Answer 16, for details of what constitutes an approved water efficient nozzle, which is not a normal hose nozzle fitting.

2. Why has Council adopted these mandatory water conservation measures?

Mandatory water conservation measures and water restrictions, especially when combined with a public education campaign, are effective measures to reduce water demands.

By reducing water demands it will be possible to minimise environmental impacts associated with Council's pumping of water from the Hastings River at Koree Island. In addition it will be possible delay future expensive construction works associated with meeting the future water supply needs of this growing community.

Council has adopted a number of mandatory water conservation measures [Level 1], which are simple, practical and commonsense ways for all the community to help conserve our scarce water resources. Garden watering is now to be undertaken on "Odds & Evens" days matching house number, only between the hours of 4pm to 10am.

The introduction of further water restriction levels is based upon available flows in the Hastings River at Koree Island and the shortage levels in Council's Port Macquarie and Cowarra off-creek storage dams. These off-creek storage dams rely upon water pumped from the Hastings River for refilling.

3. How can I water my garden and lawn under these mandatory water conservation measures?

Garden and lawn watering is now to be undertaken on "Odds & Evens" days matching house number, only between the hours of 4pm to 10am, with no watering on the 31st day of the month.

Hand-held hoses with a cut-off trigger or control nozzle can be used between the hours of 4pm to 10am.

Manual watering systems [that you turn on or off by hand] and automatic watering systems [that turn themselves on and off] can be used between 4pm to 10am. However, these systems must be monitored to ensure that no run-off or water wastage occurs, such occurrences will be considered an offence and penalties will apply.

It is recommended that soil moisture content be checked on each occasion to determine the need to operate any watering system.

Watering cans and buckets, which are filled from a fixed tap, can be used at any time or day of the week.

These mandatory water conservation measures apply to all homes, units, private and public gardens and sports grounds connected or supplied by the town water supply system.

4. What constitutes a cut-off trigger or control nozzle on a normal hose?

A **cut-off trigger nozzle** [as shown below in Figure 1] is a common hose attachment, which allows the hose user to turn the water spray on or off by depressing a handle or trigger.



Figure 1 – Cut-Off Trigger Nozzle Hose Attachment

A **control nozzle** [as shown below in Figure 2] is a common hose attachment, which allows the hose user to turn the water spray on or off by twisting the nozzle.



Figure 2 – Control Nozzle Hose Attachment

5. Can I use my drip irrigation system to water my garden?

Yes, drip irrigation systems with special low-pressure drip devices that release water slowly, in drips, at or below ground level near plant roots can be used at any time.

6. Can I use grey water or recycled water to water my garden?

Yes, grey water and recycled water can be used at any time to water gardens. See grey water usage guidelines.

7. How can I wash my car under these mandatory water conservation measures?

The washing of cars is now permitted at any time and this should preferably be undertaken on a lawn or gravel area. Hoses and high pressure cleaning units must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle. These requirements apply to both private and commercial use.

The washing of cars in driveways or on the roadway, which results in run-off water

entering any stormwater systems, could incur penalties associated with pollution as defined under the Protection of the Environment Operations [POEO] Act 1997. Council would recommend the use of commercial car wash stations which use high pressure cleaning units, recycle water, collect and treat associated water pollution.

8. I have seen the local car and caravan yards washing their vehicles, is this allowed under the Level 1 Water Conservation Measures?

Under the previous Level 3 Water Restrictions all business and commercial water users were required to apply for an exemption. Such exemptions were only granted on the proviso that best practice water conservation efficiency measures were adopted for the approved water usage.

In the case of car and caravan yards this included limiting the frequency of washing, the use of buckets and hose rinse only or high-pressure cleaning units. In addition many innovative solutions including the collection and re-use of rainwater were adopted by this industry in the local area.

The washing of cars and caravans is now permitted at any time. Council will be encouraging the continuation of the many innovative solutions used by car and caravan yards of car and caravan washing.

All hoses and high-pressure cleaning units must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

9. How can I flush my outboard motor and wash my boat under these mandatory water conservation measures?

The washing of boats, trailers and flushing of outboard motors is now permitted at any time and this should preferably be undertaken on a lawn or gravel area. Hoses and high pressure cleaning units must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

The washing of boats, trailers and flushing of outboard motors in driveways or on the roadway, which results in run-off water entering any stormwater system or waterway, could incur penalties associated with pollution as defined under the Protection of the Environment Operations [POEO] Act 1997.

Council would recommend the use of commercial car wash stations which use high pressure cleaning units, recycle water, collect and treat associated water pollution.

10. Can I wash my dog and animals?

The washing of dogs and animals is now permitted at any time and this should preferably be undertaken on a lawn or gravel area. Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

11. Can I wash out my garbage bins?

The washing of bins is now permitted at any time and this should preferably be undertaken on a lawn or gravel area. Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

The washing of bins, which results in run-off water entering any stormwater system or waterway, could incur penalties associated with pollution as defined under the Protection of the Environment Operations [POEO] Act 1997.

12. Why have car washing businesses and stations been allowed to operate during the water restrictions?

Commercial car washing businesses and stations have been allowed to operate during the water restrictions, with an exemption, as many of them recycle water,

use low water volume high pressure cleaning units and also properly collect and treat associated pollutants.

13. Can windows, gutters, roofs, and walls be cleaned with a hose?

The cleaning of windows, gutters, roofs and facades is now permitted at any time. Hoses and high pressure cleaning units must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

It is strongly recommended that high-pressure cleaning units be used wherever practical to reduce the volume of water used and runoff caused by these activities.

14. Why can't I clean my driveway or paths using a hose any more?

Using a hose to clean driveways, paths and hardstand areas is considered to be an inappropriate use and waste of our valuable water resources. In addition such water use and wastage contributes significantly to the pollution of our creeks and waterways, with the associated runoff from our stormwater systems.

The cleaning of driveways, paths and hardstand areas can now only be undertaken to remove and properly dispose of loose material using either a broom, vacuum cleaner or air blower unit.

No hose can be used, unless:

- Required as a result of accident, fire, health hazard or other emergency, or
- An approved water efficient nozzle* [less than 9 litres per minute] or high pressure cleaner unit, fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle is used.

The normal cleaning of driveways, paths and hardstand areas [including Council footpaths and public areas] must only be undertaken, following removal of loose material as detailed above and spot cleaning of any engrained material. Only then can an approved water efficient nozzle or high-pressure cleaner unit be used if required, to complete cleaning activities. It is important that water usage is minimised at all times.

The cleaning of driveways, paths and hardstand areas, which results in run-off water entering any stormwater system or waterway, could incur penalties associated with pollution as defined under the Protection of the Environment Operations [POEO] Act 1997.

Note: * See Answer 16, for details of what constitutes an approved water efficient nozzle, which is not a normal hose nozzle fitting.

15. I have seen shop owners and street cleaners hosing footpaths, is this allowed under the Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

The mandatory water conservation measures also apply to the cleaning of footpaths and arcades. In many cases there are genuine public health requirements to ensure the health and safety of the community.

Council will now be working closely with contractor cleaners and shop owners to ensure that such cleaning activities are conducted in accordance with the mandatory water conservation measures and also to ensure that any associated stormwater pollution is properly collected and treated.

16. What constitutes an approved water efficient nozzle or high-pressure cleaner unit and where can I buy one?

An approved water efficient nozzle is one, which uses 9 litres of water per minute or less.

The volume of water used by different water efficient nozzles, should be indicated upon its packaging. Generally a nozzle with an opening of less than 3mm, will meet the requirement of less than 9 litres of water per minute.

A simple way to check the volume of water used by a water efficient nozzle is to fill a normal 10- litre bucket of water with the nozzle. If the nozzle fills the bucket in less than 1 minute, then the nozzle does not comply with the less than 9 litres per minute requirement.

Some high-pressure cleaning units look similar to a vacuum cleaner. They have a pump to increase the pressure of the water delivered by a trigger nozzle attached by a hose to the unit. Examples of high-pressure water cleaning units include brands such as GERNI or KARCHER. These are generally highly water efficient, using 9 litres per minute, compared to garden hoses that use 20 litres per minute.

Approved water efficient nozzles and high-pressure cleaners are available from hardware stores and large retailers.

17. Can I fill my pool and spa under Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

The filling and topping up of swimming pools and spas is now permitted at any time. However, such filling and topping up activities must be monitored and closely supervised at all times to ensure that no overflow, run-off or water wastage occurs, such occurrences will be considered to be an offence and penalties will apply. Council would encourage all pool owners and operators to minimise evaporation water losses by installing a pool cover and to also use rainwater collection from any adjacent roof down pipe to help reduce the need for topping up of the pool.

18. Can I empty and re-fill my pool under Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

The emptying and re- filling of swimming pools to repair damage and leakage problems is now permitted.

Council would encourage pool owners to only employ commercially qualified pool repairers and recognised pool maintenance operators to conduct such activities.

19. Can new turf be laid and watered?

The installation of new turf is now permitted on the basis of a two week exemption period for people installing new turf and hydro mulching, to allow watering between 10am to 4pm, only with hand held hoses which must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.

At the end of the two-week period, watering of new turf by handheld hoses, or manual or automatic watering systems [which must be monitored and supervised] is permitted only on "Odds & Evens" days matching house number, between 4pm to 10am, to maintain the new turf. This is in accordance with the mandatory water conservation measures.

20. Can I apply for an exemption from the water conservation measures?

Exemptions will not be granted for domestic water users, as this would greatly undermine the effectiveness of the water conservation measures, it would be difficult for Council to administer and police and could also result in neighbourhood disputes.

21. Can our local sporting fields be watered under Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

Private and public sporting fields can be watered [including Council open space facilities] on “Odds & Evens” days matching the street number and only between the hours of 4pm to 10am.

Council is currently both implementing and investigating alternative water supply sources for many of the local sporting fields, public gardens and open space facilities. This will help to reduce current water demands and also ensure that these facilities can be better maintained during future drought conditions.

22. What new water conservation requirements have been introduced for the commercial, construction and building industries?

A number of permanent water conservation measures have also been adopted for the local commercial, construction and building industries as follows:

- Hoses must be fitted with a water cut-off trigger or control nozzle.
- Watering systems cannot be used between **10am to 4pm**.
- Dust suppression permitted with recycled water only.

Council will also continue to conduct its free water efficiency audit service, which is aimed at achieving best practice water usage and eliminating water wastage in all business and commercial activities in the local area.

23. Will businesses that use water still need to apply for an exemption and what conservation measures now apply to business activities?

All business and commercial water usage will need to comply with the mandatory water conservation measures. Applications for any exemptions will be reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis. Such applications would need to demonstrate un-due hardship and provide alternative water conservation measures to offset any requested exemption conditions.

24. How is Council ensuring that tourists do not waste water?

Council has implemented a regular program of water system audits and water usage reviews, which have been promoted to all tourist accommodation owners and operators.

These audits and reviews have assisted many operators to reduce their daily water consumption and improve water efficiency in their day-to-day activities.

Information cards are also provided for each room and holiday unit in the local area. This information, together with media promotions including beach visits, is regularly supplied to ensure that all tourists are made aware of the need to conserve water.

A program is continuing to install low-volume outdoor and indoor shower and tap facilities at all of Council’s beaches and amenities.

25. Will beach showers, fish cleaning tables and boat ramps be reconnected and allowed to be use water under Level 1 Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

It is now proposed to review the reconnection beach showers and fish cleaning tables to the water supply system, this will include the provision of water efficient appliances and flow control devices to minimise water usage.

A program is continuing to install low-volume outdoor and indoor shower and tap facilities at all of Council’s beaches and amenities. Council is also investigating a long-term program to provide rainwater tanks where practical at surf clubs and beach facilities to provide an alternative water supply for showers and toilets.

At this stage outdoor showers will remain disconnected and one spring loaded tap will be provided at each fish-cleaning table.

At this stage taps for boat cleaning will remain disconnected, with boat owners being encouraged to either utilise commercial car washing facilities or flush motors and clean boats at home.

26. What is Council doing to help conserve water in its day-to-day activities?

Council recognises that it must lead by example and clearly demonstrate its leadership in the area of practical water conservation and reuse.

Many changes have been made to the way which Council uses water, including an audit of all Council facilities, which has resulted in a retrofit program to replace and install water efficient appliances and practices.

Council will also be endeavouring to ensure that all of its current activities are conducted in accordance with mandatory water conservation measures.

A water reclamation treatment plant will provide alternative water supply system for many of Council's public and open space facilities. This water will be obtained from the existing Port Macquarie wastewater treatment plant. The water reclamation treatment plant will produce up to 2 million litres per day of high treated water for irrigation, toilet flushing and other approved commercial water usage.

27. I have access to bore water and/or water collected by rainwater tanks. Can I use this water under the Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

Yes, water used from a bore or rainwater tank not connected to or supplied by town water supply are not yet subject to these water conservation measures. However, you need a current license from the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources [DIPNR] to use bore water.

The local DIPNR office is located in Grafton and ground water licensing officers can be contacted on telephone no: 66 40 2000

Council will provide a sign for your home or business to inform neighbours and others passing by that you are using rainwater or bore water to water your garden, etc.

It is proposed to continue to seek the State Government's support to extend Council's water conservation measures to all water usage including bore and rainwater, to properly recognise the need to conserve all water supply sources.

28. Will any exemptions be granted under Mandatory Water Conservation Measures?

Exemptions will not be granted for domestic water users, as this would greatly undermine the effectiveness of the water conservation measures, it would be difficult for Council to administer and police and could also result in neighbourhood disputes.

All business and commercial water usage will need to comply with the water conservation measures. Applications for any exemptions will be reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis. Such applications would need to demonstrate un-due hardship and provide alternative water conservation measures to offset any requested exemption conditions.

29. How does Council determine when to implement Water Restrictions?

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has developed a Drought Management Plan to monitor and respond to decreasing river flows and water storage levels. The plan is based upon over a hundred [100] years of historical data and includes analysis of rainfall and river flows, together with more recent [since 1980] water consumption records.

A summary of Council's Drought Management Plan is available on Council's website at www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au

The Hastings District Water Supply Scheme has been designed in accordance with State Government Guidelines, which represent a balance between a secure and affordable water supply system. In this way the water supply system has been developed to ensure that water remains available with appropriate levels of restrictions to prevent a failure of the system during the worst likely drought event.

30. How are the underlying principles of water restrictions determined?

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has developed a Drought Management Plan to monitor and respond to decreasing river flows and water storage levels. There are some fundamental principles that have been used to develop the Drought Management Plan.

These include:

- Trying to share the responsibility for saving water across the whole community as fairly and equitably as possible,
- Trying to minimise the economic hardship so that as many business segments as possible remain viable, and
- Restricting significant non-essential water using activities to reduce overall consumption and reduce demand on the water supply system.

The adopted Water Restriction Levels set out a series of water consumption and savings targets under each level of the water restrictions.

31. What is being done to ensure that water restrictions are minimised in the future?

Council has now implemented the revised Level 1 Water Restrictions as mandatory water conservation measures to further reduce long-term water supply demands across the whole community.

The recently implemented Development Control Plan No. 48 has been introduced by Council to ensure that the principles of both water and energy efficiency are incorporated into all future residential developments. This includes the provision of water tanks and water efficient appliances in all new houses.

Council is constantly reviewing future water supply needs and available resources; a detailed 30-year capital works program has been developed to meet anticipated water supply needs. Potential sources of water include increased river abstraction and water treatment, increased off-creek storage capacity, reclaimed water re-use and desalination.

All of these investigations and planning activities involve the basic concepts of both the affordable and sustainable development of our natural resources. A number of the proposals currently being implemented and/or investigated include:

- Additional off-creek dam storage capacity,
- Water sensitive and efficient urban design,
- River water treatment,
- Stormwater and Reclaimed Water reuse schemes in each urban area, and
- Desalination schemes

In the meantime Council will be actively continuing with its successful WaterWise public education and water conservation promotion campaigns, so that eventually water conservation practices will become a normal part of life for all of the community.

32. Will Council be conducting patrols to catch people wasting water?

Yes, Council does actively conduct patrols both during the day and after- hours. Council rangers are responding to all reported breaches of the water restrictions and conservation measures.

Council will continue to rely upon the public's support and assistance in the monitoring of the water conservation measures by reporting any suspected breaches.

33. What do you do with people who break the rules?

Information will be provided to all residents and the community to make sure that they are fully aware of the mandatory water conservation measures [Level 1].

Council Rangers will investigate all reports of people using water outside the restriction requirements.

Any person found to be deliberately breaching the restrictions will be issued immediately with an "On-The-Spot" fine.

34. What are the penalties for breaking the rules?

Under the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act & Regulations Council is able to take legal action against a person or corporation found breaching restrictions.

Customers who fail to comply with Council's water restrictions can have their water supply restricted, face "On-The-Spot" fines and/or prosecution in the local district court.

The penalties are detailed below:

- "On-The-Spot" fines of \$220, and
- Up to \$2,200 fines, if prosecuted through the local district court.

In addition, the same penalties also apply for water theft and unauthorised access of water from Council's mains and hydrants.

35. What do I do if I see someone wasting water or breaching the mandatory water conservation measures?

Contact Port Macquarie-Hastings Council on 65 818111 between 8am to 5pm and after hours on 65 832225, to report any breaches of the current water restrictions.

36. I have seen someone taking water from a fire hydrant, is this permitted?

No, the only people approved to take water from fire hydrants, are members of the NSW and Rural Fire Brigades, who are actively engaged in the fighting of a fire.

Should you observe anyone accessing or drawing water from a fire hydrant, please immediately report this to Council on 65 818111 between 8am to 5pm or after hours on 65 832225.

Some Other Common Water Supply Questions include:

37. What are environmental river flows, why are they important to the health of our rivers and how do they impact upon of water supply system?

Environmental river flows are the minimum river flows, which must be preserved for downstream river users and the aquatic environment. These minimum river flows are based on statistics derived from actual stream flow data.

The minimum environmental flows adopted for Council's water supply pumping

activities at Koree Island on the Hastings River have been derived to help protect the aquatic environment. This includes adequate river levels and flows to maintain:

- Fish passage downstream of the pumping station,
- Water depth over aquatic plants and animals, and
- Salinity and other water quality parameters at acceptable limits.

Council's water supply pumping from the Hastings River to fill the Port Macquarie and Cowarra Off-Creek Storage Dams will be regulated to preserve minimum environmental river flows.

During periods of drought when periods of low river flows may occur, Council's river pumping will be limited to ensure that these minimum environmental flows are maintained.

The water stored in Council's off-creek storage dams will then be used to meet water supply needs, until river flows return to normal. Extended periods of drought will require Council to implement staged water restrictions to reduce non-essential water usage and preserve the storage capacity of the dams.

38. Why doesn't Council simply pump dirty river water after rainfall events to fill the off-creek storage dams, when there is plenty of flow in the river?

It is not possible to simply fill the off-creek storage dams with dirty river water because of the impacts, which would occur to the quality of drinking water supplied to consumers.

The sediments and turbidity in the dirty river water would not quickly settle out in the dams. In addition, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus bound to the sediments would cause the growth of algae in the dams. This would ultimately result in the water quality in our dams deteriorating to a point they could not be used to supply water to the community.

The need to remove sediments, turbidity and nutrients from muddy river water would require the construction of expensive water treatment facilities, which represent a significant capital investment for Council.

These water treatment facilities would only then be fully utilised for a limited period of time each year and may not significantly increase the overall drought security of the current water supply scheme. However, such options continue to be considered and reviewed as part of the ongoing planning for the local water supply scheme.

39. Why doesn't Council simply install desalination plants to obtain all the water we need from the ocean?

At this point in time the environmental footprint of desalination plants is quite large when you consider the energy requirements, associated green house gas emissions & waste disposal issues associated with these plants. However, it is considered that as desalination technology continues to rapidly develop, many of these concerns will possibly be satisfactorily addressed.

The further development of reclaimed water schemes in Port, Wauchope & Camden Haven areas will assist Council in reducing current demands for potable water supplies [approximately 10% reduction and possibly more]. In addition, the water treatment processes for these water reclaimed water schemes will include reverse osmosis [RO], which is the process used for desalination.

The experience and knowledge, which we will gain from the design, construction & operation of these reclaimed water plants, will assist in the possible future implementation of desalination as an alternative water supply source for this local area. Desalination will continue to remain an option in future investigation studies for the augmentation of the Hastings District Water Supply Scheme.