

# BCPUD PIPELINE



Fall 2019

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## It's Time for a Reminder To Conserve Water Until the Rains Return.

As this newsletter goes to print, Bolinas and the rest of California are experiencing “red flag” weather conditions, with hot temperatures and low humidity. Although rains tend to begin by late October-early November, there is no rain in the forecast yet. We therefore issue this reminder about the need to always be mindful about your water use in Bolinas. Please read the main article in this newsletter and check for any leaks at your property. Please employ “best practices” by not running appliances like dishwashers or washing machines until you have a full loads to run. Please be conscious of how long you are showering and try to limit showers to 5 minutes or less. Thank you so much for your anticipated cooperation and for everything you do!

With gratitude,

BCPUD staff

**Water or Sewer  
emergency? Please  
contact our office at  
415-868-1224**

## Leaks, Leaks and More Leaks!

As we all know, Bolinas has an extremely limited water supply – indeed, this is the fundamental reason why the BCPUD long ago imposed a moratorium on new connections to the water system. In general, BCPUD customers are amazing “water conservers”, using far less water on a daily basis than most other Americans. However, there is one area for improvement, and that is reducing the occurrence and persistence of unintended water losses, more commonly known as leaks, by identifying them and stopping them as soon as they occur. Nearly every month the BCPUD Board of Directors considers requests for financial relief from large, unexpected quarterly water bills from customers who have experienced leaks on their property, sometimes amounting to tens of thousands – or even hundreds of thousands – of gallons.

*Q. My toilet has been running for a while now. I jiggle the handle to stop it when I hear it, but when I'm not home its probably running sometimes. Could a running toilet be using very much water?*

A. YES! Toilet leaks are one of the biggest sources of water loss in the district. Recently, a customer unknowingly was losing 900 gallons a day to a toilet leak. To put this in perspective, the average household in Bolinas uses 150 gallons per day. In addition to the wasteful loss of water, toilet leaks of this magnitude can overwhelm a septic system and/or add thousands of gallons of water to the BCPUD's sewer system. If you suspect a toilet leak, please consult a plumber immediately and/or educate yourself about any repair needed as you may be able to fix it yourself (it may be as simple as replacing a damaged or worn flapper).

*Q: I purchased a great fixture for my water hose; it shuts off the water at the fixture so I don't have to deal with shutting off the water at the hose bib. This saves me a lot of time and I know it is better to hand-water than use an irrigation system because of the serious leaks that can occur on an irrigation system. Maybe the BCPUD should let people know about these hose fixtures?*

A. While the BCPUD agrees that hand-watering your garden is far preferable to using an irrigation system (such systems are prone to malfunction and leaks), please do not rely on the water fixture! Please shut off the water at your hose bib when you are done watering. A BCPUD customer forgot to do so and then went on vacation; while the customer was out of town, the water pressure in the hose caused the fixture to pop off, resulting in an enormous water leak.

*Q: We own a home in Bolinas but we are not there full time. We are careful to check all of the fixtures at our property when we are there and before we leave to make sure everything is ok. We don't need to worry about any leaks, do we?*

A: YES! Leaks can happen in a variety of ways, even when no one is home or using any water at the property. For example, if the home has an irrigation system, a broken valve or irrigation line damaged by gophers or other animals can cause a huge water loss. Or, an interior plumbing leak can occur and even flood your home. A toilet leak also can develop unexpectedly. All of these things have happened to BCPUD customers. We advise customers who do not live here full-time to have someone check on their property from time to time to make sure their meter is not moving if no one is home (a moving meter is a sign of a leak, see explanation “How to read your BCPUD meter, below), or install a “Shut-Off Valve” at your home so that you can shut the water off while you are away.

## How to read your BCPUD Meter

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Learning how to read your own water meter will help you to understand how much water you are using at your property at any given time and will help you identify whether you have a leak.

First you will need to locate your water meter box. Generally the meters are in the public right-of-way in front of your house. Look for a rectangular concrete box that is flush with the ground (similar to the one pictured on the left). You may need a tool of some sort to remove the lid from the box. Once you locate the meter box and remove the lid, you should see the face of your water meter (see the photo to the right, below). If the meter box is full of dirt, as is often the case due to ever-present Bolinas gophers, you will need to dig it out of the box to gain access to your meter.

Reading your water meter is similar to reading the odometer in a car. Read all the numbers from left to right that appear under the words Cubic Feet. The first digit on the right represents one cubic foot, the second digit from the right represents 10 cubic feet, the third from the right represents 100 cubic feet and so on. One revolution of the water meter sweep hand (the dial pointing between 1 and 2) equals 1 cubic foot or 7.48 gallons. You may have an older meter that looks slightly different than the one pictured, but all meters fall under the same general parameters. Note, if the white triangular dial and sweep hand are moving, there is water running through the meter.



We suggest that you start with a 24 hour meter read to find out how many gallons are being used at your property in a day. The first time you read your meter, write down the numbers indicated in the Cubic Feet window. Wait 24 hours and re-read your meter. Subtract the prior reading from the second one and multiply the difference by 7.48. This will give you the number of gallons used at the property within the 24 hour period that you read the meter.

**For Example:** Day 1 – meter reading is 014574; Day 2 – meter reading is 014590; Difference is **16 cubic feet** (day 1 subtracted from day 2); Multiply 16 by 7.48 (7.48 gallons = 1 cubic foot); **Total Gallons used in 24 hours – 119.68**

**To check if you have a leak, please do the following:** Turn off all faucets and water-using plumbing fixtures or appliances. Don't forget any outside fixtures. Mark the position of the meter sweep hand lightly with a pencil and/or note the reading on your meter. Wait approximately 30 minutes before rechecking the meter. If the sweep hand moved, a leak is indicated. If you confirm (or even suspect) that you have a leak on your property, call the BCPUD at 415-868-1224 (24 hours a day) so that we can come and turn your meter off to stop the water loss, and then contact a plumber immediately to find and repair the leak.