

## Water conservation sought

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SACRAMENTO — Salinas and Monterey County water operators are paying increasing attention to conservation as a way of stretching supplies to meet future demands and control costs.

Both water companies that serve Salinas are considering plans for tiered rates, increasing the price per gallon as a customer's usage climbs above a set amount.

The California Water Service Co. and ALCO Water Co. promote conservation with various customer notices, and Cal Water offers discounts for different residential and commercial water-saving appliances.

"Conservation, we push it pretty hard with rebates," said Jim Smith, Cal Water's Salinas district manager.

The county's \$3.5 billion agricultural industry also is actively engaged in conservation, said Curtis Weeks, general manager of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency.

"There is more drip irrigation per acre (in Monterey County) than anywhere else in the state," Weeks said.

ALCO executive Tom Adcock said conserving water helps reduce the cost and effect of the energy needed to pump and transport the water.

"In the overall sense, water conservation is important to our water system and to the people of California — not only is it water, but it is linked directly to energy and the amounts of pollution to produce that energy," Adcock said.

But he said conditions aren't yet to the point where it's necessary to mandate or call for voluntary cutbacks, such as the "20-gallons-a-day challenge" advocated by some Southern California agencies.