

Reward for water conservation is higher utility bills

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

Their lawns dry and their trees on the verge of dying, Californians have dramatically cut water use during the state's relentless drought, only to learn that many local utilities are hiking rates to make up for the lost revenue.

Water providers in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area and other parts of the state have recently told customers that rates will go up at least temporarily, as utilities struggle to pay for building and repairing pipes, buying water and other costs, even as customers cut back.

"Droughts are costly for water agencies," said Lisa Lien Mager, spokeswoman for the Association of California Water Agencies. "Revenues are being affected by the mandatory conservation but at the same time costs are going up."

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