

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN/SAMPLES

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 water utility communications strategy covers these primary areas: recently implemented cost containment measures, cost drivers for rate increases, including operations and capital improvement, commodity costs, reserve balances, utility bill comparisons, and efficiency programs and services to help keep utility bill costs low. The City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) communication methods include use of the utilities website, utility bill inserts, messaging on utility bills, MyCPAU online account management platform, email newsletters, print and digital ads in local publications, social media, community messaging platforms, and through direct mailings of the Home Water Reports and online WaterSmart portal.

As a not for profit public utility, CPAU must recover its costs primarily through revenue generated by rates. Any increased supply costs are passed through rates to CPAU customers, including for capital improvement. The cost to deliver water supply to Palo Alto and for CPAU to distribute water to customers is high, as it includes maintaining and replacing water infrastructure, customer service, billing, and administration.

CPAU's communication about water utility rates will focus on the forecasted increase in costs passed down from Palo Alto's water supplier, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), ongoing capital improvement and infrastructure upgrades, and what CPAU is doing to keep costs down. Maintaining water pipes, mains, and service connections is necessary to prevent leaks, which cost the utility and rate payers money, and prevents damage to infrastructure which could exacerbate safety and reliability concerns in the long term.

CPAU promotes water use efficiency programs and easy water-saving behaviors to aid in our water saving efforts and help customers keep utility costs low. Messaging reinforces that although rates may increase, efficient usage can help customers avoid seeing a significant water cost increase on the utility bill. The City is also exploring opportunities to expand use of alternative water supplies and is working on a One Water Plan for that purpose to further reduce demands on potable water supplies in the future.

Staff maintain a dedicated webpage at cityofpaloalto.org/ratesoverview to provide an overview on all utility rates, costs to the utility, updates to financial forecasts and proposed rate changes. While print materials such as bill inserts and ads feature prominently, CPAU is exploring additional ways to communicate directly to customers utilizing unique programs like the relatively new WaterSmart portal and Home Water Reports, in addition to the near real-time water usage data provided by new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and the ability to send customers alerts about high water usage. Staff continue to maintain an active presence in social media and information sharing through citywide email newsletters. Staff attend community outreach events and host educational workshops on these related topics.



“WaterSmart has prompted me to make some changes and fix a toilet.”

—Testimony from a Palo Alto customer

SEE THE REVERSE SIDE TO FIND OUT HOW WATERSMART WILL HELP YOU SAVE MONEY



SUMMER'S OVER. CLOUDS ARE ARRIVING. NOW IS THE TIME TO START DIALING BACK ON YOUR WATERING.



With the cooler fall weather, lawns and plants need less water than the hot summer months.

Start the season right with some easy water-saving tips:

Become the next satisfied user of WaterSmart.

WaterSmart makes it easy to see where you're using the most water and get recommendations customized to your household. Get started by logging into: cityofpaloalto.org/watersmart



For users with disabilities who require materials in an appropriate alternative format, including audio or modifications to policies or procedures for access: City meetings, programs, or services should contact the City's ADA Coordinator, George Hoel at (855) 329-2390 or by emailing ADA@cityofpaloalto.org. TTY: (415) 329-2390. Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Stocked without chlorine.

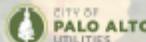


-  **Reset your landscape irrigation timer to water once a week.**
 -  **Get a free irrigation check-up through the Water Wise Outdoor Survey program.**
 -  **Upgrade to a smart weather-based irrigation controller.**
 -  **Log into WaterSmart to learn more about your water usage patterns.**
 -  **For more seasonal water-saving tips go to cityofpaloalto.org/efficiencytips**
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BRING YOUR YARD TO LIFE!

Want to transform your lawn into a beautiful water-wise garden, but don't know how to get started? Valley Water's new Design Assistance Program provides access to an on-site consultation with a landscape designer. The designer will provide recommendations on plants, layout, and other features based on the unique conditions of your yard. Get a rebate of up to \$5,000 to help make the change.

Learn more at watersavings.org


SCHEDULE A FREE IRRIGATION CHECK-UP!

Do you need help adjusting your irrigation timer or identifying problems with your sprinklers? Call Valley Water for a free in-person visit to check your irrigation equipment.

Save water and money by booking your survey today! Visit bit.ly/WWOutdoorSurvey or call (888) 987-9873.



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CAPTURE, CONSERVE, CONVERT!

Rebates for Rain Gardens, Rain Barrels, and Low-Water Landscapes



6 different rebates for Palo Alto Residents

Ways to Save Water and Keep Bill Costs Low

Find more water-saving tips and available rebates at cityofpaloalto.org/efficiencytips

-  Log on to WaterSmart to see where you use the most water.
-  Check your toilets, sinks, and irrigation systems for steady leaks. **REBATE!**
-  Upgrade to a smart irrigation controller. **REBATE!**
-  Consider replacing your lawn with beautiful water-wise plants. **REBATE!**

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The City of Palo Alto and Valley Water landscape and water rebates help you save money on home projects while focusing on sustainability, efficiency, and conservation. Learn more at cityofpaloalto.org/waystosave.

RAIN GARDEN REBATE*
Receive up to \$600 by adding a rain garden to your yard to reduce stormwater runoff from your property. Rain gardens are a great addition when converting your lawn to a low-water use landscape. See Landscape Conversion Rebate for more information.

RAIN BARREL REBATE*
Collect rainwater from your downspout and receive \$70 per rain barrel with a barrel size of 40 - 100 gallons.

CISTERN REBATE*
Similar to rain barrels, cisterns allow you to collect and use a larger amount of rainwater. You will receive \$1.00 per gallon with a minimum cistern size of 200 gallons.

PERVIOUS PAVEMENT REBATE*
Receive \$1.50 per square foot adding pervious pavement to your property (e.g., permeable pavers, porous asphalt, pervious concrete, or grid pavement).

For questions on Stormwater Rebates call (855) 329-2122 or email clearbay@cityofpaloalto.org
TO LEARN MORE VISIT:
cityofpaloalto.org/waystosave

*Funded by your monthly Stormwater Management Fee.

