

# Water

**N E W S**

**February 2005**

## New Conservation Ordinance Requires Small Changes For Great Results

While San Antonio is already one of the most water conservation-wise cities in the nation, the prospect of higher water costs in the future, is making it more important than ever to conserve.

After nine months of drought in 2001, Mayor Howard Peak asked SAWS to develop a year-round conservation program that would result in a decrease in the frequency and impact of severe drought restrictions.

The results of the four years of work came about when the City ordinance passed on January 20. The Conservation ordinance detailed provisions that could provide a savings of 1.3 billion gallons of water annually.

After many meetings and open forums with a cross-section of our stakeholders, over 4,000 completed surveys, valuable input was gathered from industries and groups, including:

- Realtors and developers
- Home Builders
- Community Conservation Committee
- Landscape and irrigation firms
- Restaurant owners
- Grass producers
- Manufacturers
- Building owners and managers
- Neighborhood

association presidents • and Car wash owners.

In addition, over 4,000 surveys were gathered from SAWS customers.

“The provisions we’ve outlined in this ordinance should save us about 1.3 billion gallons per year,” says Calvin Finch, Director of Conservation.

“That equates to about three gallons per person, per day. Which is a huge step in reducing the need for additional, more expensive, water resources.

As of January, 2006 rain sensors will be required on all in-ground sprinkler systems. (See inset.) The sensors detect rain/moisture and prevent systems from running. If customers do not install rain sensors and a complaint is made, they will only receive one warning before being issued a water waster ticket.



The biggest impact of the ordinance will be in new home construction, starting in January 2006. At that time new home landscapes will be required to include low-water use features like:

- Four inches of soil beneath grass
- Zoned irrigation – based on plant types, not size of property

*Left: Rain sensors like the one pictured will be required on all existing sprinkler systems as of January 2006. Shown above: Hydroscopic disks - not collector cups - are required in eligible rain sensors.*

In 2007, drought tolerant grass (varieties that can withstand an absence of water for 60 days) will be required in landscapes.

Other parts of the ordinance addresses changes in charity car washes, power wash businesses, commercial irrigation, cooling towers, and more.

For more details on the city’s new Conservation Ordinance, visit SAWS Web site at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org) or call 704-SAVE.

## Now It’s Easier to Pay Your SAWS Bill!

If you choose to pay your SAWS bill in person, beginning March 1 there are even more locations to choose from!

SAWS has expanded payment locations to all San Antonio and Boerne HEBs, as well as La Fiesta, Nicks Drugs, Noor Pantry, Woodforest National Banks, Cash in Advance, and Cash Kings.

That’s in addition to SAWS service

locations Downtown, on WW White, and Las Palmas.

**Pay by Phone** - You can also pay by phone using a credit card (VISA or MasterCard), bank draft, or debit card that has a Visa or MasterCard logo, through our Call Center. Agents are available from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Just call 704-SAWS (7297).

### Pay Online -

Use our e-Bill service to view, receive, and pay your bill online. Any SAWS customer can view current and past bills or make a one-time payment via bank draft or credit card payments (VISA or MasterCard). There’s no commitment or obligation to continue



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## Free Income Tax Preparation Program

Need help with your income tax return? How about having your income tax return prepared for free? Consider using the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA).

Taxpayers (working individuals and/or families) who earn incomes less than \$36,000 are eligible to receive free tax preparation assistance through VITA. Taxpayers eligible to participate in the VITA program may also qualify for the Earned Income Tax and Child Tax credits. VITA also offers free E-file.

The City of San Antonio Department of Community Initiatives, in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies, offers the VITA Program.

VITA offers these free services, now

through April 15, at more than two dozen locations throughout San Antonio.

Locations and times where you participate in the program are listed at the SAWS Web site at ([www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org)) or call 207-8762 for more information.

To take advantage of this program, bring the following when you visit one of the VITA sites:

- Driver's license or photo I.D.
- All W-2 forms.
- 1099 forms (if you have any).
- 1099-G form (if you received unemployment insurance benefits at any time during 2004).
- 1099-INT (if you received bank interest during 2004).
- Social Security cards or Individual Taxpayer I.D. number for all persons in your family.
- If filing jointly, your spouse must come with you.

## Xeriscape Contest Announced

Do you think your xeriscape garden is the cream of the crop? Here's your chance to prove it!

Enter your yard in the 2005 Bexar County Annual Xeriscape Contest and Garden Tour.

Entries must demonstrate

- Water conservation
- Planning and design
- Good use of adaptive low water demand plants
- Appropriate use of turf
- Creative use of hardscape
- Use of color
- Use of mulch
- Maintenance

All entries must also be prepared to allow the public to tour the garden on specified dates.

Awards include a \$200 Nursery Certificate for each winning residence (up to six) in a neighborhood, and \$1,000 to the winning neighborhood to underwrite an approved xeriscape project in a common area or neighborhood school.

Xeriscape Garden Tours will be held on Saturday, May 7, and Sunday, May 8, 2005 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. On these days, Gardening Volunteers of South Texas will be at each winning home to answer questions.

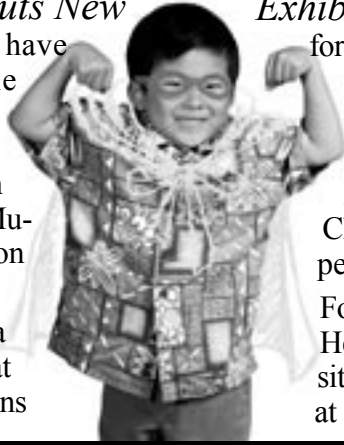
For more information, or to enter, call 522-9220.

## How to turn kids into H<sub>2</sub>O Super Heroes: Just add water!

*SAWS Debuts New Exhibit at Children's Museum*

SAWS H<sub>2</sub>O Heroes have a new hangout! The new H<sub>2</sub>O Heroes Clubhouse opened in January at the San Antonio Children's Museum (305 East Houston Street).

The Clubhouse is a permanent exhibit that features hand-on lessons



for children (and their parents) about how water gets to their house, how it leaves, and how they can save water.

Admission for the San Antonio Children's Museum is \$5.95 per person (children under 2 free).

For more information on the H<sub>2</sub>O Heroes Clubhouse, visit our Web site at [saws.org](http://saws.org), or call the museum at 212-4453.

## Easier Ways to Pay Your SAWS Bill! (Cont. from pg. 1)

using the service. Payment with e-Bill directly credits your SAWS account so you can say goodbye to transaction fees and late charges.

**Automatic Bill Pay** - The Easy Pay Plan is an electronic payment plan designed to make paying your SAWS bill an automatic process. The SAWS Easy Pay Plan auto-

matically transfers funds electronically from your bank each month.

**Pay by Mail** - Of course, you can still choose to mail your payment in the return envelope received with your bill. You can pay by check, Traveler's Check, or Money Order. *Please do not send cash.*

### Affordability Programs

SAWS offers a number of programs to help customers having financial hardship with their water bills. To determine if you qualify, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

Water News is published for customers of the San Antonio Water System. For more information regarding Water News, contact the Public Relations Department at (210) 704-7320.

#### Numbers to Know

Business Office	704-SAWS (704-7297)
Customer Account Information	704-SAWS
Jobline	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

#### 24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/  
Water Waste Reporting 704-SAWS  
Visit our web site at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org)



### Drinking, bathing, cleaning, cooking....

Many people take water for granted. But everyday, families risk losing water service because they can't afford to pay their water bill. If you'd like to help keep water flowing to our neighbors in need, you can contribute to Project Agua, a non-profit program from SAWS helping customers pay their water bill. It's simple and no contribution is too small to help. Just look for the donation box on the return portion of your SAWS bill.