



# CONNECTIONS

SPECIAL EDITION  
SPRING 2021

**NBU**<sup>®</sup>  
NEW BRAUNFELS  
UTILITIES

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Dear Friends:

The past 12 months have tested and proven the resiliency of our community. We have adapted to change and learned that the ordinary could be accomplished in extraordinary ways. Only weeks ago, we faced an extreme weather event that challenged our system and fortitude and will continue to challenge business processes from finance to conservation.

As Chief Executive Officer of New Braunfels Utilities (NBU), I lead a passionate team dedicated to educating our customers about the intricate details of rate design and assisting customers with utility bill management. A key component is understanding how conservation is directly linked to preserving our water supply and providing the most cost-effective water resources. As you read this special edition of NBU Connections, you will hear from experts on our team as well community partners, including the

Comal County Conservation Alliance, a Texas Master Gardener, and the Hill Country Alliance, about the importance of conservation and its impact on our economic well-being.

As we prepare for summer, customers can expect to see an increase in their bills during the peak season - June 1 through September 30. Peak pricing is designed to encourage conservation during those months when the weather and higher demands impact our water supply. I encourage you to read pages 8 and 9 to learn more about the rates and how they are structured. On pages 10 and 11, you will find helpful resources to guide you through the NBU water rate structure and tools to help manage utility costs.

While NBU offers many ways to help customers incorporate conservation and manage utility costs, one of our newest online tools is the Residential Bill Calculator. Customers can go to our website at [nbutexas.com](http://nbutexas.com), to estimate their bills during peak and off-peak months. I encourage you to read more about the advantages of using NBU's Residential Bill Calculator on page 13.

I hope you will find this publication a handy resource and I welcome your feedback. As we serve you - our family, friends, and neighbors - we will continue striving to provide innovative essential services that enhance our community.

**Ian Taylor**  
Chief Executive Officer

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[nbutexas.com](http://nbutexas.com)

## MISSION

Enhancing the quality of our community by providing innovative essential services.

## VISION

New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) will be recognized as a trusted community partner dedicated to excellence in service.

## CORE VALUES

Safety, Integrity, Team, and Stewardship.



## Conserving Our Water, Saving Our Springs

*"Comal Springs is one of the 'Great Springs of Texas.' In fact, it is the largest spring system in the American Southwest, and it issues from one of the most prolific groundwater sources in the world - the Edwards Aquifer. These facts might make those of us who live here feel proud, but they should also give us pause. Why? Because the growing demands on the aquifer endanger it and threaten its future as a relatively inexpensive water supply."*

Helen Ballew  
Comal County Conservation Alliance



The I-35 corridor between San Antonio and Austin is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. More people means more demand on the aquifer, even though we have other (more expensive) water supplies coming on line. Some might say "Why worry? We have this vast amount of good clean water underground. We won't run out, and besides, it's cheap." We might not literally run out of fresh drinking water from the aquifer, but if we draw it down too far to get that water, we could lose our great springs. When the springs run dry, the rivers run dry, water-based tourism disappears, and economies dry up. When alternative sources of water are needed to make up the difference, the cost of water goes up.

If the Edwards Aquifer is so important to our community well-being and even our pocketbooks, how can we protect this exceptional groundwater supply and its great springs? We can do that first and foremost by conserving water, using less, thus keeping it in the ground. If you don't use it, you don't lose it, and you don't have to pay for it.



*Guest Columnist, Helen Ballew is Vice President of the Comal County Conservation Alliance whose mission is "preserving the land, water, and wildlife of Comal County."*

We can also ensure a reliable, affordable water supply by protecting the land that protects the aquifer. When rainfall collects and drains into the aquifer, the aquifer fills up and its water supply remains available for our judicious use. So, protecting the land that keeps the aquifer full and being conscientious about water conservation are two important ways we can ensure a clean, affordable water supply well into our future.



### ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO:

Jason Rosales, New Braunfels Utilities' Pretreatment Coordinator for Wastewater Treatment and Compliance, his wife Brandea, and daughters Emma and Olivia, enjoy watching the springs bubble to the surface along the beautiful banks at the Headwaters at the Comal.

*Photo credit: Matt Chase, Matthew Chase Photography*



## Identify Savings Opportunities with a Virtual Performance Assessment

FREE Virtual Performance Assessments are conducted online or over the phone without staff visiting your home.

New Braunfels Utilities provides free virtual water, energy, and irrigation performance assessments to residential customers, upon request. Utility assessments are designed to analyze utility usage and identify ways to make successful and beneficial improvements.

### VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS INCLUDE:

- Real-time and historical analysis of energy, indoor water, and irrigation water use and habits.
- Review of energy and water usage best management practices.
- Advice on improvements that can result in lower energy and water usage.
- Comparison of usages to subdivision and city averages.

For more details or to schedule a virtual assessment, call **830.608.8925** or email [conservation@nbutexas.com](mailto:conservation@nbutexas.com).

# Fundamentals of Xeriscaping

What is Xeriscaping? Literally, the word comes from the combination of two words "xeri" derived from the Greek word "xeros" for dry and "scape," meaning a view or scene. It translates to mean "dry scene."

It simply means landscaping with slow-growing, drought-tolerant plants to conserve water and reduce yard trimmings. It doesn't mean "no water" and it doesn't mean you can only plant cactus.

Texas has a limited supply of water, subject to ever-increasing demands. Xeriscaping fundamentals are an important way to immediately show cost savings through lower water bills. Xeriscaping can also reduce the amount of plant trimmings which must be disposed of or otherwise managed, thereby helping the community save resources. It means less work for the homeowner!



**When planning your Xeriscape, use the following seven fundamentals:**

- 1 Plan and design for water conservation.
- 2 Use natural amendments, like compost, to feed and condition soil as needed.
- 3 Irrigate efficiently with a properly-designed irrigation system, including hose end equipment. Water the right amount at the right time.
- 4 Use mulches to reduce evaporation and keep the soil cool. Native Cedar Mulch from the local area is the best choice.
- 5 Create practical turf areas of manageable size. Choose the right turf for the area.



*Guest columnist Bob Fitzsimmons is a Texas Master Certified Nurseryman, landscape designer, organic specialist, Texas native plant grower, and 20-year radio host in New Braunfels on KGNB and KNBT radio. He has answered garden related questions for New Braunfels and the surrounding Comal County for many years and is the owner of Southernwood Gardens in New Braunfels.*

- 6 Select plants with low water requirements and group plants with similar water needs together. While indigenous plants are naturally accustomed to local climates, xeriscaping does not mean planting Texas native plants only. One could draw from many colorful, drought-tolerant plants native to Mediterranean climates such as Southern Europe, South Africa, and Australia. Using native and adapted plants reduces the need for fertilizers and pesticides.

- 7 Maintain the landscape properly by mowing, weeding, pruning, and fertilizing with slow release natural fertilizer.



**Remember that xeriscaping conserves water and saves valuable landfill space.**



# Spring Irrigation Checklist

## Step 1 – Water Supply

**Turn on the water supply at the shut-off and backflow valves.**

If any shut-off or backflow valves have been turned off for the winter, make sure that they are turned back on before testing the system. Turn these valves on slowly to give time for the pipes to pressurize without overloading them with immediate pressure.

## Step 2 – Preliminary Leak Detection

**Check for leaks before turning on any sprinkler zones.**

After the mainline has been pressurized, it is a good time to walk through the yard to ensure that there are no leaks near the valves or in the grass. It may be difficult to locate them after the system has run, so it is a good practice to check before testing.

## Step 3 – Testing

**Check each zone for leaks and sprinkler heads that are not aimed properly.**

Once the system has been pressurized and no initial leaks have been found, it is time to test each zone to ensure the heads are in good operating order and no other issues impede the efficiency of each watering zone. Once each zone is activated, check to make sure that there are no broken heads, ground leaks, or spray patterns that have been diverted away from the area that is to be watered.

## Test the rain sensor.

This is also a good time to make sure that the rain sensor is functioning. With the system on, many sensors can be activated by pressing the actuator located on top of the device to manually test the functionality. After pressing this button, the zone should turn off.

## Step 4 – Programming

**Program each zone for maximum efficiency.**

After all zones have been inspected, a test to ensure maximum efficiency and to avoid oversaturation should be conducted. This is the point at which landscapes will cease to absorb water and begin running off or pooling. Each zone should be monitored to determine when this situation occurs and you should notate the time amount needed to reach this point. A good rule of thumb is to start each zone at ten minutes and add/subtract time based on the results.

**Make sure that all programming cycles are checked.**

Most sprinkler timers offer several programming cycles for multi-day schedules. Ensure that all programs are checked to ensure the system only runs on the days and times that are appropriate. New timers often have manufacturer programming pre-set, which may increase the amount of irrigation cycles other than programmed.

## Step 5 – Monitoring

**Repeat these steps once per month.**

To ensure the sprinkler system operates at maximum efficiency, it is a good practice to reinspect the system once a month. Factors that can alter the initial settings include increasing summertime temperatures, rainfall, and foot and lawn maintenance traffic.



## Irrigation is the Biggest User of Water



"Outside of Texas, when people think of our area, they may think of a desert. Surprisingly, that is not necessarily too far from the truth. New Braunfels is a semiarid area. We experience intense flash droughts bookended by flash floods. The result is a very significant drying effect," said Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager Andrew Cummings.

Turfgrass, which is not native to Central Texas, requires a significant amount of irrigation.

"Many people do not realize St. Augustine grass is not native to New Braunfels," Cummings noted. "Many popular types of grass, including Bermuda, are native to tropical areas that experience higher levels of annual rainfall than Central Texas." Planting these common grasses requires more water than landscaping with native plants.

"An important factor to consider when planning your landscape is choosing the appropriate grass type. Planting non-native grasses will require more water to maintain than native grasses, resulting in a higher water bill without proper maintenance or landscaping practices such as aerating, mulching, etc.," Cummings said.

New Braunfels Utilities offers information online about sustainable landscaping and provides consultations and assessments to ensure its customers' efforts are worth the investment.

"When our customers want to know what grows well, we ask them to take a drive in the beautiful Texas Hill Country and notice the landscape they see. It doesn't require any supplemental irrigation. It just grows," Cummings added.

To incentivize planting of drought-tolerant landscaping, NBU offers rebates for customers who implement landscaping that reduces the need for irrigation. Many customers will stack rebates, which can be as simple as laying down a new bed of mulch or removing a section of turfgrass.

Customers who qualify can take advantage of the many rebates offered by NBU. Simply complete the online application and submit the rebate with the necessary documentation for an inspection. Rebates are applied as a credit to the customer's bill.

Information about rebates and water conservation can be found at [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation).

## Know Your Water Stages

New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) monitors the Edwards Aquifer level and implements water restrictions to encourage conservation and protect natural resources in times of drought. Each drought stage has unique water use guidelines and each stage is highlighted on NBU's Facebook page and on [nbutexas.com](http://nbutexas.com).

NON-DROUGHT		STAGE 1		STAGE 2		STAGE 3	
Watering with a sprinkler or irrigation system is allowed <b>TWO DAYS PER WEEK</b> based on the last digit of the address. Must occur <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. AND AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>		Watering with a sprinkler or irrigation system is allowed <b>ONE DAY PER WEEK</b> based on the last digit of the address. Must occur <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. and AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>		Watering with a sprinkler or irrigation system is allowed <b>ONE DAY PER WEEK</b> based on the last digit of the address. Must occur <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. and AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>		Watering with a sprinkler or irrigation system is allowed <b>ONE DAY PER WEEK, EVERY OTHER WEEK</b> , on assigned day, beginning on the second Monday after Stage 3 has been declared. Must occur <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. AND AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>	
Watering with a hand-held hose, bucket, drip irrigation system, or a soaker hose that does not spray water in the air is allowed any time on any day.		Watering with a hand-held hose, bucket, drip irrigation system, or a soaker hose that does not spray water in the air is allowed any time on any day.		Watering with a hand-held hose, bucket, drip irrigation system, or a soaker hose that does not spray water in the air is allowed on any day <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. and AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>		Watering with a hand-held hose, bucket, drip irrigation system, or a soaker hose that does not spray water in the air is allowed on any day <b>BEFORE 10:00 a.m. and AFTER 8:00 p.m.</b>	
LAST DIGIT OF ADDRESS	WATERING DAYS	LAST DIGIT OF ADDRESS	WATERING DAY	LAST DIGIT OF ADDRESS	WATERING DAY	LAST DIGIT OF ADDRESS	WATERING DAY
0, 2, 4, 6, or 8	Monday/Thursday	0 or 1	Monday	0 or 1	Monday	0 or 1	Monday
		2 or 3	Tuesday	2 or 3	Tuesday	2 or 3	Tuesday
		4 or 5	Wednesday	4 or 5	Wednesday	4 or 5	Wednesday
1, 3, 5, 7, or 9	Tuesday/Friday	6 or 7	Thursday	6 or 7	Thursday	6 or 7	Thursday
		8 or 9	Friday	8 or 9	Friday	8 or 9	Friday

## FREE WATER AND IRRIGATION PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) provides free water and irrigation performance assessments to both residential and commercial NBU customers, upon request. Utility assessments are designed to analyze the performance of your utility equipment and identify ways to make successful and beneficial improvements.

The assessment involves an inspection of the home or business to look for signs of leakage or excessive use and a calculation of irrigation system usage if necessary. You may select a day and time that you would like to request to have an assessment done in your home or business.

To schedule your Water or Irrigation Performance Assessment visit [nbutexas.com/assessments](http://nbutexas.com/assessments).



## Evaluate your water use

Assessments are a great way to identify waste and solutions that can help reduce utility expenses.



## Leak Detection Checklist

Household leaks are more common than you think.



Household leaks waste more than one trillion gallons of water per year, nationwide. New Braunfels Utilities offers helpful advice to ensure your pipes are sealed and do not contribute to this waste.

### Indoor

- **Toilets** – Check for leaking toilets by adding food color to the tank. If the color shows up in the bowl after ten minutes, the toilet is leaking.
- **Kitchen and Bathroom Sink** – Check for any dripping faucets or wet sinks.
- **Washing Machine** – Check for leaking hose connections at the wall faucets and the machine.
- **Water Heater** – Check for leaking relief valves or loose connections.
- **Water Softener** – Check to see if the softener is making flushing noises. It should be completely silent when not in use.
- **Reverse Osmosis Systems** – Check the plumbing for any leaking valves or filters.

### Toilet Leak Video

Find out how you can reduce household leaks with this easy leak prevention test.



[nbutexas.com/leakchecklist](http://nbutexas.com/leakchecklist)

### Outdoor

- **Outdoor Water Spigots** – Check for leaking faucets and hoses.
- **Sprinkler System** – Check the yard for muddy areas or standing water. Broken pipes and defective valves (round green lids in the grass) are the most common causes for leaks in yard sprinklers.

If no leak is readily visible after your inspection, a plumber or leak detection specialist may need to be contacted.

# Water Rate and Structure Explanation



In fall 2020, the New Braunfels City Council approved a New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) rate plan that increases water and wastewater rates progressively through 2023. These rate increases are driven primarily by the need to acquire water supply, build and maintain infrastructure, keep up with the community's growth, and to meet regulatory requirements.

Communities across Texas are working to ensure they have acquired access to enough water to meet their growing needs; NBU is no different. New Braunfels Utilities has a history of maintaining a diversified water portfolio that focuses on having an adequate water supply to meet the needs of our community for decades to come. As with any market, as demand increases, so does the cost of supply. In Texas, there is a growing cost associated with maintaining adequate water supply to meet the population's needs.

In addition to acquiring water rights to service NBU's territory, NBU must also build the infrastructure to service new areas while also working to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure. These needs are driven not only by growth, but also by local and state regulations related to water and wastewater infrastructure. The costs associated with water and wastewater infrastructure are more significant than installing and upgrading electrical infrastructure due to the intensive construction processes involved.

## Rate Creation:

In creating the new water and wastewater rates, NBU worked with the Boston University Institute for Sustainable Energy to develop rates that protect essential-use water for all customers, ensure revenue recovery for system resiliency, and send price signals to encourage water conservation.

NBU Residential Customers by Water Usage Level		
Water Usage Tiers (Gallons)	# of Customers	% NBU Customers
0 - 7,500	27,038	65.01%
7,501 - 15,000	8,732	20.99%
15,001 - 25,000	3,556	8.55%
25,001 - 50,000	1,880	4.52%
50,001 - 100,000	346	0.83%
100,001 and greater	40	0.10%

The NBU residential essential use average is approximately 6,000 gallons per month, which typically consists of drinking, bathing, and internal home use. Moderate usage, which includes essential use and some landscape watering/outdoor use, equates to total monthly usage of between 7,500 and 15,000 gallons per month. Water use above 15,000 gallons per month is typically deemed high use. The table above shows the total number of customers at each water usage level.

Viewing the table at the 15,000 to 25,000 gallons usage range shows that more than 3,550 NBU customers use water within this range, and approximately 95 percent of NBU customers use less than 25,000 gallons of water per month.

New Braunfels Utilities has a long-term water goal of reducing the average daily usage per person, also known as gallons per capita per day (GPCD), from its current 168 GPCD to 120 GPCD. Water conservation is among NBU's highest priorities. In many ways, water conservation is the same as adding additional water supply, and it is the most economical means of increasing water supply.

The newly approved rates will affect all customers over the next three years, with the most considerable impact on those customers whose water use is in the high and very high use ranges. A conservation mechanism built into NBU's rates includes "Off-peak and Peak" pricing rates. Off-Peak months are October through May, with the summer months of June through September being Peak months. During Peak months, the higher cost of water is designed to reflect the impact water demand has during those critical summer months.

Along with Peak pricing, there is a water supply fee (WSF) charged on monthly water usage per every 1,000 gallons used above 7,500 gallons. This supply fee is to cover the cost of new water supply.



The table to the right outlines the forecasted cost range the rate increases will have on a customer's water bill over the next three years. It is important to note the rate increase will have a 14 percent effect to all customers essential water use of 7,500 gallons or less over the forecasted three-year time period. This percentage increase is equivalent to a total of \$4.00 in 2023.

The wastewater rates increase over the three years as well. Wastewater rates are calculated using a customer's three lowest months of water usage in a rolling 12-month period. The average for all NBU customers is currently 4,600 gallons.

For additional detail on NBU rates and to find breakdowns for each rate type and year, visit [nbutexas.com/electric-water-and-sewer-rates](http://nbutexas.com/electric-water-and-sewer-rates).

The rate increases were designed and implemented to help cover the costs of additional water supply, infrastructure, treatment, and regulatory compliance. When comparing NBU's rates with those of surrounding communities, NBU's rates are still among of the lowest. See Figure A below for more information.

Forecasted Customer Water Cost Ranges 2020-2023 Based on Usage						
		Usage	2020 Min-Max	2021 Min-Max	2022 Min-Max	2023 Min-Max
Essential Use	TIER 1	0 - 7,500	\$0 - \$27	\$0 - \$26	\$0 - \$28	\$0 - \$31
	TIER 2	7,501 - 15,000	\$28 - \$61	\$27 - \$67	\$29 - \$83	\$32 - \$91
High Use	TIER 3	15,001 - 25,000	\$62 - \$128	\$68 - \$146	\$84 - \$182	\$92 - \$199
	TIER 4	25,001 - 50,000	\$129 - \$375	\$147 - \$427	\$183 - \$520	\$200 - \$566
Very High Use	TIER 4	50,001 - 75,000	\$376 - \$621	\$428 - \$709	\$521 - \$858	\$567 - \$933
	TIER 4	75,001 - 100,000	\$622 - \$868	\$710 - \$990	\$859 - \$1,196	\$934 - \$1,300

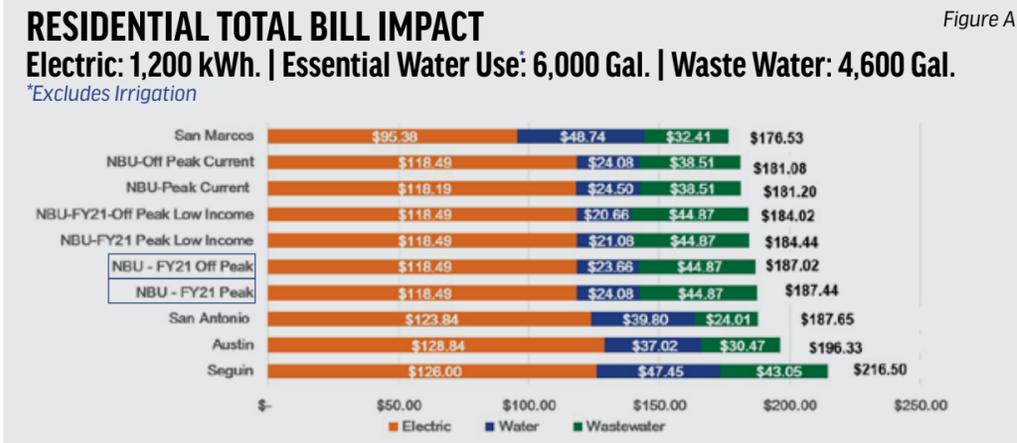
NBU Wastewater Rates				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Min Monthly Charge	\$18.50	\$21.55	\$24.35	\$27.52
Rate Per 1,000 Gallons	\$ 4.35	\$ 5.07	\$ 5.73	\$ 6.47
Max Monthly Charge	\$ 99.41	\$ 115.85	\$ 130.93	\$ 147.86

Take proactive steps to keep your utility bill as low as possible. Taking control of your water use and implementing conservation techniques when using water outdoors will have the most significant effect. New Braunfels Utilities has many tools available to help customers manage utility bills. A comprehensive list can be found on NBU's website at [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation).

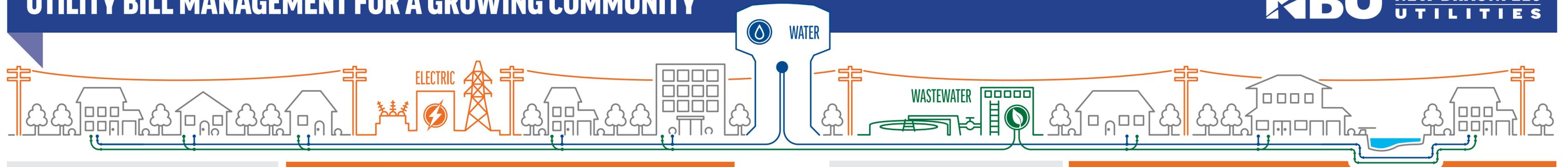
## Take advantage of helpful tools:

- Receive text or email notifications when your account usage has passed a set level
- Residential water assessments conducted by NBU staff evaluate your home systems, giving you detailed reports
- Irrigation assessments performed by NBU staff, including updating settings to your irrigation controller
- Online bill calculator to understand the effects of different levels of water use on your bill
- Informational videos to help you better use your account monitoring tools

If you are interested in learning more, call 830.608.8925 or email [conservation@nbutexas.com](mailto:conservation@nbutexas.com).



# UTILITY BILL MANAGEMENT FOR A GROWING COMMUNITY



## RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY GROWTH

New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) is making required upgrades to its electric, water, and wastewater infrastructure, securing new water resources, and adding vital system capacity. These upgrades will ensure NBU is well prepared to meet the needs of its customers for decades to come. To preserve natural resources and control rate increases, NBU utilizes several techniques to encourage conservation.

Tiered billing charges customers a higher water rate as use increases. This pricing structure is designed to keep water affordable for essential use, such as drinking, washing, and cooking. With the tiered water rate structure, costs are allocated to high use customers who drive the need to acquire new water supplies and to build new infrastructure.

Seasonal, or Peak, rates are effective June through September to encourage conservation during periods of reduced precipitation and potential increased demand associated with lawn watering and outside water activities. Limiting water usage during the months of June through September can have a positive impact on your utility bill.

## RESIDENTIAL PEAK RATE EXAMPLES\*

ESSENTIAL USE TIER 1		MODERATE USE TIER 2		HIGH USE TIER 3		VERY HIGH USE TIER 4	
0 – 7,500 Gallons Per Month Basic indoor water use such as cooking, showering, and washing dishes and clothes.		7,501 – 15,000 Gallons Per Month Indoor water use and moderate lawn irrigation.		15,001 – 25,000 Gallons Per Month Indoor water use and elevated lawn irrigation.		More than 25,001 Gallons Per Month Usage above and beyond the first three tiers.	
65.01 percent of NBU Customers		20.99 percent of NBU Customers		8.55 percent of NBU Customers		5.45 percent of NBU Customers	
USAGE EXAMPLE <b>6,000</b> Gallons/Month		USAGE EXAMPLE <b>12,000</b> Gallons/Month		USAGE EXAMPLE <b>20,000</b> Gallons/Month		USAGE EXAMPLE <b>40,000</b> Gallons/Month	
OFF-PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$1.66</b>	PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$1.73</b>	OFF-PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$4.18</b>	PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$4.50</b>	OFF-PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$5.70</b>	PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$6.84</b>	OFF-PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$7.84</b>	PEAK RATE \$/Thousand Gallons <b>\$10.20</b>
COST \$/Month <b>\$9.96</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$10.38</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$31.26</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$33.23</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$72.30</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$80.93</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$218.40</b>	COST \$/Month <b>\$268.13</b>

\*Cost estimates reflect monthly volume charges only. For complete rate information visit [nbutexas.com/rates](http://nbutexas.com/rates).

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Customers can help offset rate increases by adjusting utility use and practicing conservation techniques. New Braunfels Utilities offers comprehensive tools, tips, and assets to help customers understand and manage utility expenses.



## BILL MANAGEMENT TOOLS

RESOURCE	SUMMARY
After-Hours One-On-One Consultations	After-hours consultations on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Automated Threshold Alerts	Instructions on how to set automated threshold notifications if you are approaching a preset water or electric volume during the month.
Bill Assistance Program	Customers experiencing financial hardship, or wanting to help customers in our community, can participate in the NBU Utility Bill Payment Assistance program.
Bill Calculator	The Residential Utility Bill Calculator can help you estimate monthly residential electric, water, and wastewater usage costs.
Budget Billing	Avoid big changes in your utility bill – especially during peak months when air conditioning, heating, and sprinkler systems can increase bills.
Conservation Videos	To keep your utility bill as low as possible, take advantage of tips and information and help save water, energy, and money by viewing the NBU video library.
Utility Consumption Reports	Request a consumption report that shows how your usage compares to your neighborhood and community averages.
DIY Videos	Take the guesswork out of programming your irrigation meters and timers, learn how to set up your online account, and manage usage alerts with helpful do-it-yourself videos.
Home Assessments	FREE water, energy, and irrigation assessments are a great way to identify waste and solutions that can help reduce utility expenses.
Leak Detection Checklist	Household leaks waste more than one trillion gallons of water per year across the nation. New Braunfels Utilities offers helpful advice to ensure your pipes are sealed and do not contribute to this waste.
Rebates	Get more for less with energy and water rebates. For more information, call the NBU Conservation and Customer Solutions Department at 830.608.8925 or visit <a href="http://nbutexas.com/rebates">nbutexas.com/rebates</a> .
Track and View Hourly Usage	Hourly usage data availability is determined by meter type.
Understanding Your Bill	New Braunfels Utilities helps break down the details of your bill. Easily find important information – the amount due, due date, usage totals, and further understand your consumption data.
Virtual Assessments	FREE Virtual Performance Assessments are conducted online or by phone without NBU staff visiting your home.

To access New Braunfels Utilities Bill Management Tools, visit [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation).



# Water Economics

When customers receive their monthly New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) bill for water and electricity usage, it totals to one number. However, behind that number, especially when it comes to water, there are many points to consider. The cost of water is the cumulative cost of acquiring, treating, and distributing water.

*"When talking to customers, I loosely define the cost of water as how much money it costs from when we pull the water out of the ground all the way to when you turn on your faucet. It is the cost from the beginning to the end,"* Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager Andrew Cummings said.

*"Because we are pulling from distributed water sources, we are basically pooling the different costs of water from different areas,"* NBU Chief Administrative Officer David Hubbard noted. *"Also, as a utility, proactive leadership and foresight have enabled NBU to secure enough water supply to ensure we never run out of water supply while also meeting the growth needs of New Braunfels."*

The rate increases customers have seen over the last year were put in place to further invest in the infrastructure needed to maintain the existing water distribution system and to also meet continued growth.

Through analyzing customer usage across the NBU system, NBU has determined 6,000 gallons of water each month per meter is considered essential use. This includes water for bathing, cooking, and other regular household use.

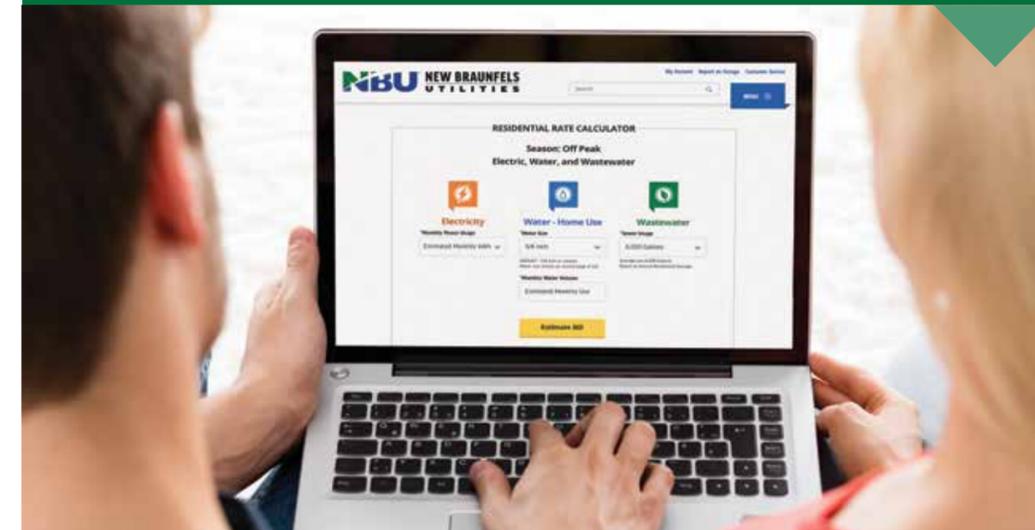
The rate increases have minimal impact on essential use and instead are applied primarily to high or very high water use which typically includes outdoor irrigation. This type of water use is what drives the need for additional infrastructure and water supply.

New Braunfels Utilities is committed to keeping essential use water affordable and offers rebates for customers wishing to lower irrigation bills. Information about these rebates can be found at [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation).

**"THE WATER RATE INCREASES PRIMARILY AFFECT IRRIGATION, WHICH IS WHAT DRIVES THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND WATER SUPPLY."**

David Hubbard  
NBU Chief Administrative Officer

# Online Bill Calculator



A surprise bill is never good news and New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) provides customers with tools to help make sure that doesn't happen. By accessing the NBU online bill calculator, NBU customers are able to determine what their bill will look like with current rates and plan for different seasons.

*"The online calculator provides customers with the opportunity to plug in anticipated usage or current usage, and it generates an estimate of what their bill will be based on that usage,"* System Control Manager Justin Stroupe said.

The calculator can compile electric, water, and wastewater usage amounts and reflect what a customer's bill would total for the month.

*"All you do is plug in the usage information,"* Stroupe added. The calculator determines if the usage would be during peak or off-peak usage times and can help customers learn about usage costs or projections.

New Braunfels Utilities uses a tiered water rate structure that increases costs the more customers use resources. This encourages more sustainable water usage rates.

*"In essence, the calculator is doing four different calculations and providing a cost estimate for the customer,"* Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager Andrew Cummings noted. *"So it can be complex if you are one of the high volume users whose usage is reflected in tiers 2, 3, and 4."*

Rates vary between seasons; however, the calculator is designed to calculate current NBU rates.

*"The customer will need to have their bill available to input required information,"* Cummings said. *"Then, the tool will ask, if the customer has electric service. Do they have water service? If they have water service, do they have wastewater service?"*

The residential rate calculator helps customers plan for changes in weather and their expected needs in a way that should seem very familiar.

*"The estimate provided by the residential rate calculator will look very much like the bill you receive in the mail,"* Cummings said.

The bill calculator is accessible to everyone at [nbutexas.com/bill-calculator](http://nbutexas.com/bill-calculator). *"Customers are encouraged to go online and experiment with the calculator for themselves,"* Stroupe concluded.

# The Future of Texas' Water Resources



Guest Columnist Katherine Romans,  
Executive Director, Hill Country Alliance

The Texas Hill Country is a region defined by its water resources. From the banks of the Blanco to the secret swimming holes of the Guadalupe to the pristine waters of the Comal, our creeks, rivers, and springs are the source of our economic and ecological resilience. Millions of Texans, from Mountain Home to Matagorda Bay, rely on those flows for their livelihoods and quality of life.

And yet, our water resources are in immediate jeopardy. Booming population growth means increasing strains on an already over-allocated resource. Three of the top five fastest growing counties in the country - including Comal County - are right here in the Hill Country. More roads, rooftops, and driveways mean less opportunity for precious rainfall to percolate into our groundwater supply. More development means additional straws pumping water from our aquifers. There simply is not an endless supply of water in our creeks, springs, and rivers to sustain the projected doubling of our current population over the next 30 years.

Time and again, studies show that conserving the water we already have is the most cost-effective way to secure our water future. The Hill Country Alliance and our partners in the Texas Living Waters Project work with residents, landowners, cities, and utilities to promote water conservation practices across the region and the state. Conservation actions taken now will continue yielding water benefits well into the future.

Each of us has a role to play in protecting the waters of the Hill Country. By installing low-flow fixtures, native and drought-tolerant landscapes, capturing rainwater off our roofs, and being savvy consumers of water resources, we can all contribute to ensuring the waters that define this region are here to sustain future generations. We hope you'll dig in to learn more about the Hill Country's water resources at [hillcountryalliance.org](http://hillcountryalliance.org).

# Budget Billing



Ease the impact of higher seasonal utility bills by spreading your bills into 11 equal monthly payments with the 12th month serving as the reconciling month.

## The sensible way to handle your utility costs.

- Your New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) bills won't go up and down and you'll know exactly what your utility bill will be from month to month, making it easier to manage your budget.
- Over time, Budget Billing won't cost you any more than regular billing.

Learn more at [nbutexas.com/budget-billing](http://nbutexas.com/budget-billing).

# New Braunfels Utilities Low-Income Discount Program

THE PROGRAM PROVIDES ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS WITH A MONTHLY DISCOUNT ON THEIR NBU WATER BILL.



In keeping with its vision to be a trusted community partner, New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) consistently strives to help customers manage their utility bills. Recently, NBU introduced a new initiative to help customers who are struggling financially and qualify for financial assistance. The low-income discount program is available for customers who meet specific criteria, offering to help ease some of their financial and economic hardship.

*"New Braunfels Utilities assesses revenue requirements annually. Part of this financial grading process is to determine needed rate adjustments that allow NBU to continue to provide essential services at affordable costs to our community. Several years ago, we identified the need for a low-income discount program and we can now provide limited resources to qualifying customers through the program,"* said NBU Chief Financial Officer Dawn Schriewer. *"What New Braunfels Utilities developed is a program to protect essential use water customers."*

New Braunfels Utilities has four water usage tiers, with essential water use (under 6,000 gallons per month) as the lowest use tier. Customers falling within this tier will not be affected by the current rate increases.

*"New Braunfels Utilities is partnering with the New Braunfels Food Bank to administer the low-income discount program. As program administrator, they will review and qualify all applicants,"* Schriewer noted.

Customers will be referred to the New Braunfels Food Bank by NBU customer service representatives when determining if financial assistance is needed. The Food Bank, which also administers the NBU Utility Bill Payment Assistance program, will determine if customers meet the program's requirements.

*"The household income will have to be at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines,"* Customer Service Manager Carlos Salas said. *"Also, if they are on unemployment or if there is an illness of the applicant or primary income provider, they may qualify for the program."*

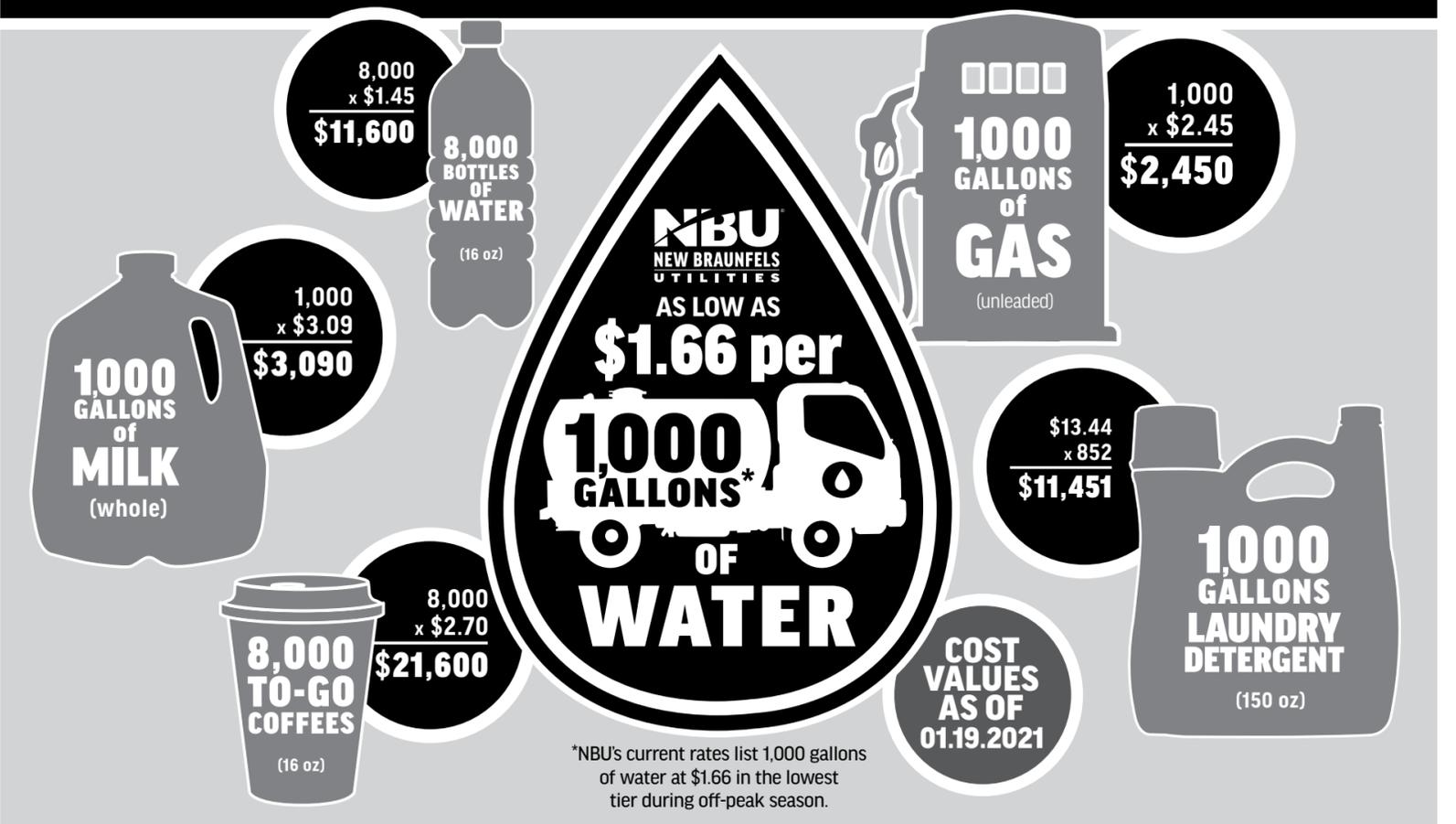
Customers may also qualify if one of the household income providers dies or the household is experiencing extreme hardship.

Discounts are applied over a 12-month period. If a customer continues to need and qualify for the program after 12 months, they will need to reapply. The program is available to a limited number of customers in its initial phase.

To learn more about the Low Income Discount Program visit [nbutexas.com/utility-bill-assistance](http://nbutexas.com/utility-bill-assistance).

# WHAT IS YOUR WATER WORTH?

## The Cost of NBU Water Compared to Common Daily Commodities.



# Gardening and Irrigating Your Lawn During Times of Drought



A good garden can make an otherwise unremarkable yard breathtaking; however, Central Texas is not known for its tropical rainfall. Thus, New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) customers should keep an eye on maintaining their gardens while not relying too heavily on irrigation.

*"In working with our customers, we have learned that many people think drought tolerant is going to be brown - and it is going to be boring. That couldn't be further from the truth,"* NBU Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager Andrew Cummings said. *"There are many things you can plant that do not take any water and provide a lot of color. We encourage people to visit the Headwaters at the Comal and get an idea of what they can do."*

There are two major types of gardening: aesthetic and production. Aesthetic includes flowers and bushes, while production includes fruits and vegetables.

Aesthetic gardening can be done in such a way that it only relies on rainfall. One key to gardening during times of drought is making sure plants' water stays with the plant. To do that, Cummings encourages the use of mulch.

*"Mulch helps store moisture and holds it to the plant roots,"* he said. *"Say you didn't use mulch... a lot of water is going to run off. The soil is so dried out and hardened that water will run the other way. Also, you get a lot of evaporation."*

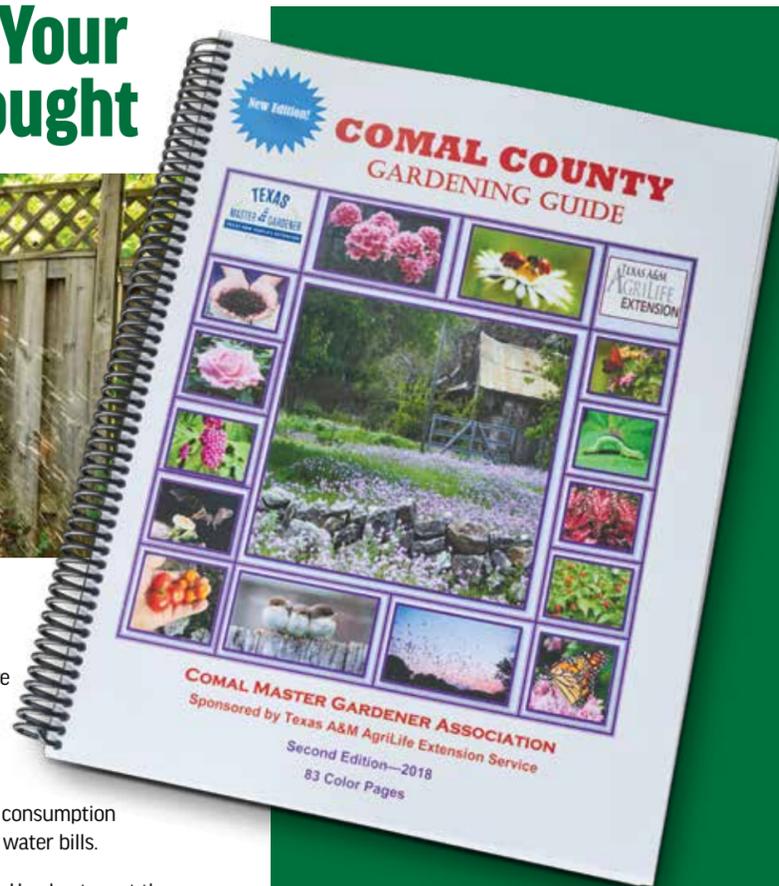
Shredded tires have also become a popular alternative to natural mulch to retain moisture while not needing to be replaced as often.

These measures help customers reduce their consumption and enjoy lower overall water bills.

Public areas such as the Headwaters at the Comal offer excellent examples of colorful, lush landscaping that is easy on the water bill. To schedule a self-guided tour at the Headwaters at the Comal this spring, visit [headwatersatthecomal.com/the-headwaters/plan-your-trip](http://headwatersatthecomal.com/the-headwaters/plan-your-trip).

For some types of gardening and turf, irrigation is necessary. In those cases, NBU encourages subsurface irrigation, such as drip lines that run underground. Even more, customers are encouraged to consider crushed granite, river rock, and artificial turf as drought-resistant alternatives to regular turfgrass.

Visit [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation) to learn more.



## 2020 – 2021 Gardening Guide Rebate

The Comal County Gardening Guide offers valuable information to help customers implement the Comal Master Gardener's best management practices to create a low-maintenance and water-conserving landscape.

- The Guide Rebate is available to NBU residential water customers only.
- The rebate will reimburse customers for the book's cost (up to \$40, with receipt).
- For purchase locations, visit the Comal Master Gardener website at [comalmg.org/gardening-guides](http://comalmg.org/gardening-guides).
- The rebate application can be accessed at [nbutexas.com/rebates](http://nbutexas.com/rebates), under Conservation Rebates.

# Rebates, Home Assessments, and How Weather Impacts Your Utility Bill

Your utility bill is typically straightforward - breaking down costs for electric, water, and wastewater services. The amount customers owe on their utility bills can be traced back to a chain of events starting thousands of miles away. La Niña, a weather cycle originating in the Pacific Ocean, traditionally brings warmer temperatures and drier conditions to Central Texas. This weather cycle is expected to last into late spring or early summer of this year.

New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) recommends thermostats be set at 78 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer and 68 degrees in the winter.

*"Generally, La Niña should promote warmer than average conditions heading into summer,"* NBU Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager Andrew Cummings said.

This cycle also can affect the level of water stored in the Edwards Aquifer, which is one of the sources NBU accesses to supply water to customers. Between 2011 and 2015, customers experienced up to Stage 3 drought restrictions.

Stage 1 limits irrigation or sprinklers to once a week. Stage 2 limits irrigation or sprinklers to once a week, and limits hand watering, soaker, or drip irrigation to before 10:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m. Stage 3 limits hand watering, soaker, or drip to before 10:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m., and sprinkler systems to every other week.

*"Going into the spring, if conditions remain drought prone, there is a potential to escalate into Stage 2 and Stage 3 drought restrictions,"* Cummings noted.



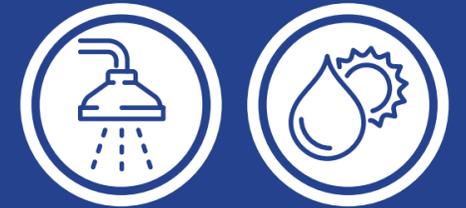
So how can customers prepare for these drought conditions? New Braunfels Utilities promotes the use of drought-tolerant plants and landscaping through rebates that can help lower customers' water bills. New Braunfels Utilities also offers FREE home energy, home water, and irrigation assessments.

Home assessments to determine a customer's eligibility for a rebate can be performed over the phone; however, some inspections require a Conservation and Customer Solutions team representative to inspect a customer's yard. Due to COVID-19, NBU currently offers contactless irrigation inspections over the phone while a representative inspects the customer's yard.

Customers can apply for rebates up to a year after a qualifying yard improvement. A receipt for proof of purchase is required.

Learn more about available NBU Rebates at [nbutexas.com/rebates](http://nbutexas.com/rebates).

# WATER CONSERVATION TIPS



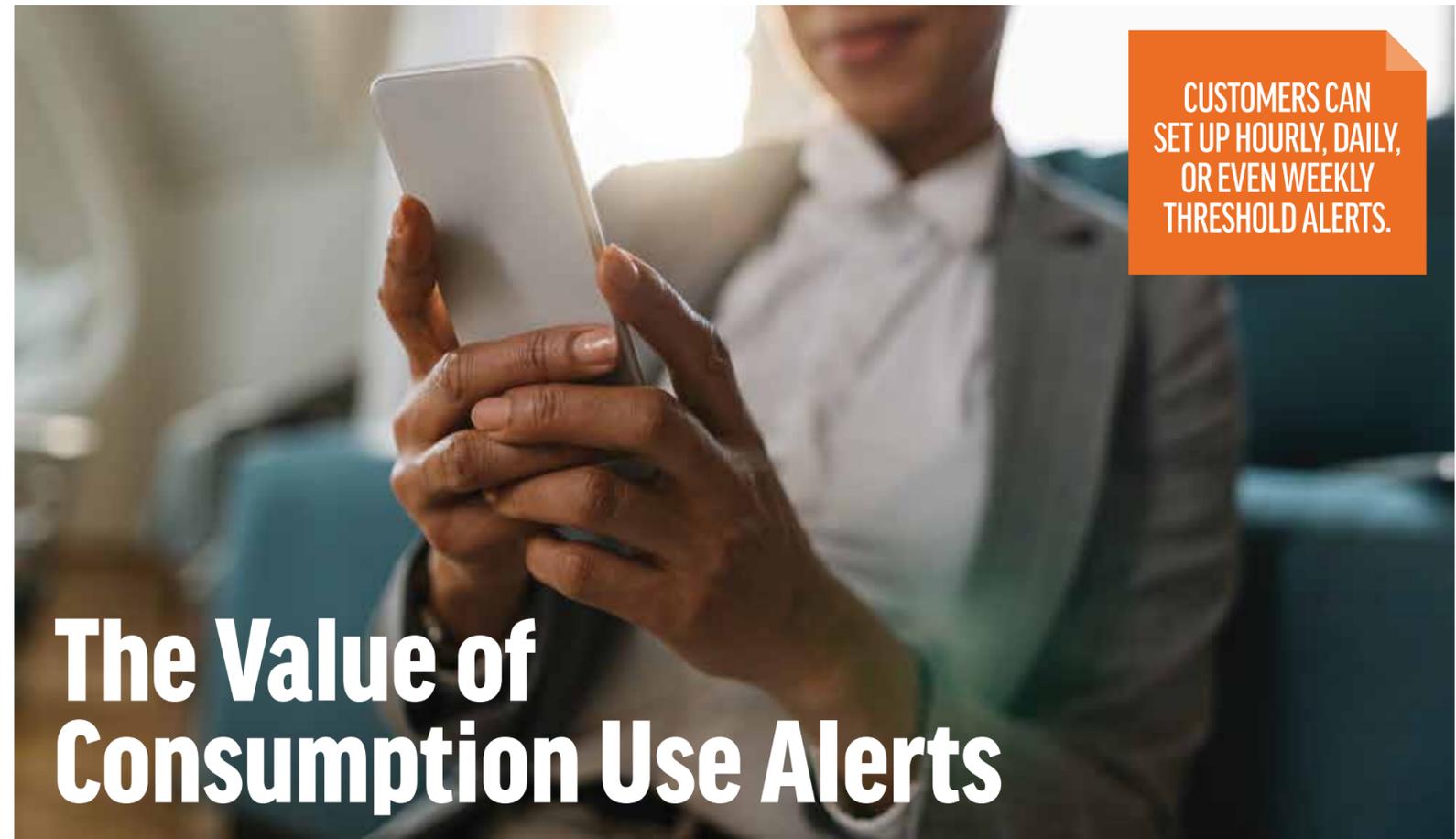
To keep your utility bill as low as possible, take advantage of the following tips and information to help save water and money during the hot summer months.

## Indoor

- Take showers instead of baths.
- Never use the toilet to dispose of trash.
- Do not allow the water to run while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Only run the dishwasher with a full load.
- Install aerators on your faucets to use less water.
- Install a low-flow shower head.
- Keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator. Running water, from the tap, until it is cool is wasteful.

## Outdoor

- Harvest the rain. Buy or make a rain barrel or a cistern to collect water for your plants.
- Use drought-tolerant plants that are adapted to this area to reduce outdoor water use by 20 to 50 percent.
- Wash your car with a bucket and sponge instead of a running hose.
- Avoid watering on windy days.
- Set sprinklers to water the lawn, not sidewalks and driveways.
- Water before 10:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m. Evaporation losses are up to 60 percent higher during the day.



CUSTOMERS CAN SET UP HOURLY, DAILY, OR EVEN WEEKLY THRESHOLD ALERTS.

# The Value of Consumption Use Alerts

While surprises can be positive and negative, New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) consumption use alerts are for customers who want to eliminate negative surprises when they receive their bill.

The consumption use alerts feature notifies customers when their water and electric usage exceeds a customer-selected threshold.

*"For example, if you indicate that you want to receive a notification when you exceed a specified consumption level within one hour, one day, or one week, a notification will be sent to you either through email or as a text message,"* said Customer Service Manager Carlos Salas. *"You can also see them online within your Customer Connect account under the Notification Settings."*

Using the existing metering system, customers can receive alerts online or on their phones about surprise spikes in water and electricity usage. Customers can also easily set up an account on the NBU website, allowing them to view and pay their bill online.

*"The notification system sends an alert to customers if water use is exceeding the threshold when it shouldn't be, for example, when the customer is not at home. Determining what prompted the alert can cut down on waste and water loss from plumbing or irrigation issues,"* Salas said.

This free service helps customers make needed repairs and detect leaks to avoid financial surprises.

*"If the customer waits until the bill arrives to check usage, they will not have time to reduce usage or to correct an issue, thereby incurring a higher bill,"* Salas added.

The notifications give customers actionable information to stop high usage before it continues.

*"The best way to save water and electricity and reduce consumption is to be aware of how much you are using,"* Salas concluded.

TO SIGN UP FOR CONSUMPTION USE ALERTS, CUSTOMERS MUST HAVE A SMART METER INSTALLED AND BE IN THE NBU ELECTRICITY COVERAGE AREA.



## Conservation and Customer Solutions Team Spotlight

The NBU Conservation and Customer Solutions team provides education, support, and oversight to ensure customers are equipped and ready to conserve and save money throughout the year. You may meet one of our representatives during a home assessment, event, or following up on a rebate request. This team is passionate about protecting our resources and helping customers.

Learn more about the NBU Conservation and Customer Solutions team below (ordered left to right per the group photo above).



**Kory Foster**  
Resource Conservation Representative

- Enjoys playing disc golf
- Likes playing guitar
- Enjoys cooking for his girlfriend



**Andrew Cummings**  
Conservation and Customer Solutions Manager

- Is an avid woodworker
- Enjoys hiking and mountain biking with his wife
- Loves to play golf with his two kids
- Will never say no to a cup of coffee



**Ashly Gonzalez**  
Resource Conservation Representative

- Has a dog named Willow and loves animals
- Looks forward to her annual family reunion at the lake
- Loves spending time with her family and friends
- Likes to work on DIY projects she finds on Pinterest



**Kimberly Klausner**  
Resource Conservation Representative

- Is a transplant from Las Vegas who loves exploring new places in Texas with her family
- Loves to make fun and colorful charcuterie boards
- Loves cooking and experimenting with different recipes from around the world
- Enjoys learning about different cultures and places



**Wyatt Kunde**  
Resource Conservation Representative

- Enjoys hunting and fishing
- Lives on a dairy farm and has multiple pets
- Enjoys spending time with his friends and family



**Kristin Martinez**  
Conservation and Customer Solutions Supervisor

- Has seven children ranging from 5 to 20 years old
- Is an avid reader and helped create the annual reading challenge for NBU employees
- Is a certified Master Naturalist with the Lindheimer Chapter and volunteers at the Headwaters at the Comal

**CONSERVATION HELP, RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

Analyzing your historic energy and water usage can help you identify opportunities for savings.

New Braunfels Utilities offers a Utility Consumption Report for residential customers. This report charts your recent electric, indoor water, and irrigation water use and compares it to your neighborhood average.

This report provides a snapshot of your utility consumption and helps identify additional opportunities for savings. As peak billing season approaches, now is the ideal time to review and adjust your usage.

To request your personal report, visit [nbutexas.com/conservation](http://nbutexas.com/conservation).

