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Water Summit to Help Residents Conserve Water

The City of Perris will host a water summit Nov. 1 at Mercado Park to provide residents information about how to conserve their usage in the midst of California's deep and continuing drought.

The fair includes a series of skits by a troupe of professional actors who use songs and humor to spread the word to save water.

Also scheduled to attend are several nurseries, landscapers and other water-related businesses to discuss low-flow and drip-irrigation systems, hardscapes to replace grass lawns and other methods to reduce consumption and costs.

A trio of water "mascots" adopted by the City to further spread the word to conserve will make an appearance at Mercado Park as well. A contest to name the mascots is underway, with the winning entries coming from Perris elementary school students. The winning names will be announced during the water fair. The 45-minute live performance will take place at 11 a.m.

The upcoming water summit continues an effort recently begun by elected officials and administrators to encourage Perris water users to cut back usage. Maria Elena Kennedy, the City's water consultant, has spoken to about 1,000 residents in the disadvantaged Downtown Perris area about the state's drought, one of the worst on record.



Perris water consultant Maria Elena Kennedy addressed the City Council Oct. 14 while accompanied by three water mascots who also will appear at the Perris Water Conservation Fair at Mercado Park on Nov. 1.

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough took up the cause earlier this month at the Southern California Fair when he donned the water-mascot costume and greeted dozens of people, handing out water-saving tips as he made his way through the crowd, posing for photos with many people he encountered. Several said they appreciated the message that water is a finite resource that must not be squandered.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough put on the mascot costume while handing out conservation tips during a community-outreach effort at the Southern California Fair.

Yarbrough was accompanied by California Military Institute students Samantha Nunez and Edward Rubalcava, both 10, who put on the min-mascot costumes. Yarbrough also appeared in a video played countless times during the fair that showed him cleaning a car without using one drop of water.

"We think we've got a lot of great ideas about how to conserve water and we want to share them," Yarbrough said. "Let's save water together. We want to get that word out at our water summit. This is important to everyone."

Yarbrough, Kennedy and Assistant City Manager Ron Carr handed out about 1,500 flyers during a pair of visits to the fairgrounds. Other outreach efforts include one-on-one and small-group meetings with Downtown Perris residents, some who speak only limited English.

Kennedy said those water consumers know about the drought and are eager to find ways to save water and dollars. By speaking directly to residents in their native language, Kennedy said Perris is going beyond the methods most communities employ when communicating with Spanish speakers, which usually includes only translating English flyers.

"Residents are eager to learn how to save water," Kennedy said during a presentation before the City Council on Oct. 14. "They are open to the message the City is spreading."



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough got an assist from California Military Institute cadets Samantha Nunez and Edward Rubalcava at the Southern California Fair.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and his colleagues on the dais were pleased the campaign has gotten off to a rousing start.

"Conserving water is very essential now and in the future," Busch said. "Our conservation program and water fair are great first steps in getting that message out. I am not surprised by the initial response—our City has stepped up on projects like this in the past."

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said the education-outreach must become a long-range goal.

"It is very important we continue to educate our residents about the importance of conservation," she said. "It is imperative they become more knowledgeable about the drought and ways to mitigate its effects on their lives."

City Councilman Al Landers said the initial response to the outreach program show that "once again, Perris is leading the way for other cities to follow."

"We see the problem, we address the problem, we solve the problem," he said. "Conserving water is a great concern to many people and one that needs to be addressed."

City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said he hopes the message of frugality takes hold with the children and teen-agers of Perris.

"This is a great opportunity to put knowledge into action," Rodriguez said. "I'm looking forward to the knowledge that will be learned and I hope young people will educate their parents on the importance of being aware of this drought and of ways to combat it."

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