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UC Santa Barbara Hosts Central Coast Sustainability Summit

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KK Holland, principal policy analyst with the Goleta Water District, left, fields a question about water conservation following a response from Madeline Ward, acting water conservation director for the City of Santa Barbara. (Gina Potthoff / Noozhawk photo)

University, Santa Barbara and Goleta conservation managers discuss drought challenges

New signs encouraging water conservation and wise irrigation practices have gone up all over [UC Santa Barbara](#), a small fraction of the tactics the university has devised in the face of a persistent drought.

Removing food trays from four dining commons saved more than 1 million gallons of water annually, and a residence hall conservation competition kept another 201,808 gallons in reserves.

If only students in campus housing could take shorter showers.

UCSB officials were joined by their conservation counterparts from Santa Barbara and Goleta on Thursday for a Central Coast Sustainability Summit session titled “Water We Going to Do?”

The all-day conference, hosted in the [Loma Pelona Conference Center](#), put special focus on water as well as energy this year.

After three consecutive dangerously dry years, speakers during the water-focused session noted heightened collaboration between organizations doling out water and those consuming it.

The [Goleta Water District](#) allows UCSB a water supply of 944.5 acres feet per year, for example, and the campus used just 488 acre feet this past year, according to Matt O’Carroll, UCSB refuse, recycling & water efficiency manager.

Although the figure still amounts to 241 Olympic-sized swimming pools, O’Carroll said, that’s a 21-percent reduction year over year — the best decrease in more than a decade.

Ninety percent of all irrigation on campus is now done with recycled water, if it's watered at all, and Carroll said more similar programs are on the horizon.

"Even if we weren't dealing with a drought, we need to start looking at our water supply and efficiency," said KK Holland, principal policy analyst at the Goleta Water District.



UCSB Refuse, Recycling and Water Efficiency manager Matt O'Carroll addresses an audience during Thursday's Central Coast Sustainability Summit at the university. (Gina Potthoff / Noozhawk photo)

Santa Barbara County has a history of drought, she said, partially because so much of its water supply is found locally.

Lake Cachuma usually supplies 57 percent of what the Goleta Water District allots to more than 87,000 people, Holland said.

Conserving 25 percent district-wide during [Stage Two](#) drought status might be a challenge, so the district has amped up educational outreach programs, including an expanded soon-to-be rolled out recycled water hauling program serving those not currently hooked up to the right pipes to receive it.

Efficient dishwashers, low-flow toilets and signs asking students to take five-minute showers are other educational measures UCSB has taken, Environmental & Energy Programs Manager Mark Rousseau said.

"You can definitely save water with competition," he said, referring to a nationwide energy- and water-savings contest that gave free stuff to winners who had signed a pledge to use less.

The number of people participating this year in the [city of Santa Barbara's](#) landscaping rebate program has quadrupled, said Madeline Ward, acting water conservation coordinator.

While the city has secured some water purchases for 2015, and could activate the [Desalination plant](#) by 2016 or 2017, Ward said much of what she and her colleagues will be doing involves holding their breath.

"It's still a big guessing game," she said. "It all depends on rain."

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