



# Borough of Glen Rock: Water Conservation Ordinance



## FAQ

### 1. Why is there a need to adopt a stricter water conservation ordinance in Glen Rock?

- Glen Rock already has a water conservation ordinance that restricts irrigation (Chapter 225 Borough of Glen Rock). The proposed revisions of the current ordinance would simply start at Stage 2 (2 days/week), rather than the current Stage 1 (3 days/week irrigation).
- With the current ordinance, most summers Ridgewood Water is forced to step up the water restrictions to emergency stages 3 and 4 to prevent depletion of the aquifer and wells. Ridgewood Water has advised that during the peak demand season in mid-summer ALL wells are turned on at full flow, and no backup reserve remains. Furthermore, the water levels are now chronically at low levels and restrictions will usually be in effect from the start of each season.
- What are the possible consequences of depletion of the aquifer?
  1. We may run into the risk of not having enough water for basic human daily needs (drinking, cooking, washing, bathing...), and additional potential implications on effective fire-fighting ability.
  2. Water quality is affected: the natural water filtration process through the ground is less efficient when the aquifer lowers, resulting in an increased level of contaminants in drinking water (higher levels of sodium have already been observed).
- Due to the increased risk of water depletion during the summer months, Ridgewood Water has asked the 4 municipalities served (Glen Rock, Ridgewood, Midland Park and Wyckoff) to come up with stricter water conservation measures that will help to prevent depletion of the aquifer and reduce the number and duration of emergency situations leading to stage 3 and 4 restrictions.
- Ridgewood Water has been fined multiple times by the NJ state Department of Environmental Protection in the last few years for exceeding its own water allocation (by 60.1 million gallons in 2010). This prompted the need for more comprehensive water conservation measures.

### 2. Why is the new water conservation ordinance proposal focused on limiting the use of lawn irrigation?

- Ridgewood Water has determined that water consumption typically increases by 300% in the summer, due to increased use of lawn irrigation as the primary cause.
- The widespread use of automatic sprinklers in recent years has led to a progressive increase in water consumption. Data from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, NJDEP, and other well-regarded sources point to considerable waste of water by too-frequent lawn irrigation by the use of automatic sprinklers.
- The increased lawn irrigation restrictions are expected to safeguard the aquifer and reduce the need to declare emergency stages 3 and 4 in summer months.

3. Do other towns have a 2-day lawn irrigation schedule similar to the GR ordinance proposal?
  - Yes, several NJ towns do (Bloomfield, Nutley, Ho-Ho-Kus, Marlboro, Orange, Camden...). Our neighboring town of Ho-Ho-Kus, drawing their water from the same Brunswick aquifer as Ridgewood Water, started a 2 day watering schedule in 2010, and reported successful reduction in water consumption since then. Ho-Ho-Kus furthermore, reported good compliance by residents as well as no issues with lawn health resulting from the higher restrictions.
  - Other towns have adopted even stricter water conservation ordinances that include mandating the installation of a SMART controller system for all new automatic sprinkler systems (see Avalon, Stone Harbor for example), or regulating house water consumption.
  - The use of a SMART controller for a watering system will allow watering on any day, which is more permissible than the watering day restrictions of the existing ordinance.
  
4. Are government properties included in the restrictions?
  - Government properties will be included in the new ordinance proposal and follow the automatic sprinkler restrictions (2 days/week after 5pm and before 10am, 30minutes duration per zone). However, the 2 allowed watering days will be during the work week.
  
5. Why is the municipality doing this? Shouldn't it be up to the water utility to establish the restrictions?
  - Glen Rock already has a water conservation ordinance in place since 2013, that restricts the use of lawn irrigation to 3 days a week (Stage 1). This ordinance was created in agreement with Ridgewood Water. The new ordinance, still in concordance with Ridgewood Water, will be an amendment of the current one, and would set the base restriction to Stage 2, pending further restrictions declared by Ridgewood Water in case of drought (Stage 3 or 4).
  - Ridgewood Water pointed out that they cannot enforce specific watering restrictions unless the municipality adopts an ordinance. For this reason they have asked all 4 municipalities to draft and adopt a stricter water conservation ordinance.
  
5. Why don't we simply educate people and make suggestions on how to conserve water?
  - Many resident would likely follow the 2-day watering schedule suggestion, but there are always some that will not. This would be unfair to those who are abiding by the rules.
  - The presence of a clear, easy to follow water restriction ordinance is the best way to ensure compliance and be fair for all residents. Ample resident education will accompany the adoption of the revised ordinance.
  
6. Who will enforce the ordinance?
  - The municipal police department will ensure that residents conform to the ordinance restrictions, by giving only warnings the first year. Starting in the second year, violations will result in a warning first, and then a fine of \$100 for a second offense within the same calendar year, and \$250 for additional violations within the same calendar year.

7. What do I need to do to comply with the rain sensor requirements?
  - All automatic sprinklers (except the hose-end sprinklers) will need to be equipped with a functioning rain sensor, to be set at ½ in. Once ½ in of rain has fallen the rain sensor will automatically shut off the sprinkler system, preventing waste of water.
  - Since all sprinkler systems installed after 2000 are, by NJ state law, equipped with a rain sensor, only owners of older systems will need to purchase and install one.
  
8. My business includes growing plants/shrubs/flowers: is the new water ordinance going to impact my business?
  - No, the ordinance exempts commercial growers. In addition, the use of a handheld hose, drip or micro irrigation equipped with an automatic shut-off is exempt from the ordinance. Also exempt is the watering of gardens established for growing fruits and vegetables.
  
9. I just planted some grass seed: do I need to comply with the water restrictions?
  - No, the ordinance exempts outdoor irrigation necessary for the establishment of newly seeded or sodded lawns or landscaping within the first 21 consecutive days of planting.
  
10. What are the regulations for watering after the application of chemicals?
  - The ordinance allows for outdoor irrigation necessary for one day where treatment with an application of chemicals requires immediate watering to preserve an existing landscape or to establish a new landscape.
  
11. SUMMARY: The proposed ordinance has been drafted to make compliance as easy as possible. Most existing lawn irrigation systems will be in compliance without the need for any changes, except for the days/hours of permissible watering. The installation of new systems with a SMART controller will allow the homeowner an exemption from the restriction to particular days for watering. This provides greater freedom of watering than currently exists with the existing watering ordinance.