

DROUGHT UPDATE

As many long time area residents have noticed, this has been an unusual winter season. December started out quite wet, and we even got a good dusting of snow at low elevations right at the end of the month. This was a promising start to the wet season that we hoped could help stave off the drought. Unfortunately, January and February have not cooperated, both here in San Diego County and in the State as a whole. January was among the driest months on record for a January in northern California – ever.



Regrettably, unless we get a March Miracle like we did nearly 25 years ago, it is increasingly likely that the prolonged drought will lead to mandatory water restrictions. We won't know what these will be with any certainty until at least April, but water managers statewide are informing us that they are very likely to come into effect this summer.

For our non-agricultural customers, the best guess at this point is that a 10% reduction from consumption during 2013 and 2014 will be required. All agencies will have their allocation calculated based on these years and an allotment established. We will need to reduce our water consumption to fit within our allocation or face stiff penalties.

For our customers who take part in the Transitional Special Agricultural Water Rate the cutbacks will be a bit deeper. Since these customers get discounted water in times of plenty, the tradeoff is a larger cutback when supplies are tight. While we can't say for certain yet, the smart money is on the TSAWR cutbacks being about 20%.

I realize that this is not news that anyone wants to hear. As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, investments that the San Diego Region has made over the last 20 years have prevented us from being in mandatory cutbacks a year or two ago. Absent these investments, the current projected cutbacks would be at least twice what they are estimated to be.

When the numbers firm up we will let everyone know what the process will be to manage the allocations.

Spring Plant Fairs Offer Big Discounts on Low-Water-Use Plants

Local water agencies partner with The Home Depot to promote water conservation

The San Diego County Water Authority and nearly a dozen local member agencies have teamed with The Home Depot again this spring to offer significant savings on water-efficient plants at San Diego County Garden Friendly Plant Fairs through May.

Specially marked containers of low-water-use plants will be discounted during plant fairs at select The Home Depot stores. Industry experts will be at the events to provide information about water-efficient irrigation supplies, and how to select and grow low-water-use plants. The Home Depot certified nursery consultants will host how-to workshops, and local retail water agency staff will be on-hand with water conservation information.

“These plant fairs offer cost-effective opportunities to trim water use and enhance your property at the same time,” said Jeff Stephenson, principal water resources specialist at the Water Authority. “More than half of the water used in a typical home is used outdoors, so renovating your landscape is one of the best things you can do to conserve water.”

The plant fair partnership is designed to increase adoption of WaterSmart landscapes that are appropriate for San Diego County's semi-arid climate. In addition to the plant fairs, the Water Authority offers many other water-saving resources, including incentive programs and a series of free classes around the region to help turn conventional yards into WaterSmart landscaping showcases. For more information about the plant fairs, classes and rebate opportunities, go to WaterSmartSD.org or call SDCWA at (858) 522-6600.

LAFCO UPDATE

RAINBOW
MUNICIPAL
WATER
DISTRICT

3707 Old Highway 395
Fallbrook, CA 92029
760-728-1178
www.rainbowmwd.com

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Division 1
Helene Brazier
(760) 723-0465

Jack Griffiths
Division 2
(760) 940-8935

Tory Walker
Division 3

Bob Lucy
Division 4
(760) 728-8325

Dennis Sanford
Division 5

STAFF

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Finance Manager
Midge Thomas

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Sherry Kirkpatrick

**Human Resources/
Safety Mgr.**
René Bush

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Over the last six months, the community of RMWD ratepayers has made their opinions clear to LAFCO that they do not want the hostile takeover by FPUD to be approved. The latest count puts the number of people opposing the action at over 800 with only about 23 in favor. We continue to see letters and emails going to LAFCO to express opposition to this takeover. Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to let them know what you think. In a perfect world, LAFCO would take this overwhelming opposition into account and consider simply disapproving the application.

Unfortunately we do not live in a perfect world. LAFCO has complex bureaucratic rules that give more power to the County staff members than you as a voter. The end result is that should LAFCO approve the application, the narrow bureaucratic rules at LAFCO will require a cumbersome protest procedure in order for the question to get on the ballot. That is, unless the RMWD ratepayers and voters go through this process, the voice of the people will not be heard.

In this protest process, LAFCO will hold a hearing and then give RMWD ratepayers and voters between 21 and 60 days to protest the decision. The form of the protest is a specific form that must be signed by registered voters in RMWD and mailed to LAFCO. In order to force an election, at least 25% of the registered voters must sign the form and mail it within the very short time window allotted – as small as 3 weeks.

As you can imagine, this is an incredibly tall hurdle for a District that covers 75 square miles across North County. We believe that the rules at LAFCO are antidemocratic at best, and we will be working to convince the Commissioners to simply reject the application. We feel that the actual ratepayers of the District should know what is in their best interest more than County bureaucrats, and the ratepayers have made it clear where they stand on the issue.

Should the Commission approve the application and force this protest process, we all need to be ready to act quickly. An email list of interested ratepayers is being collected so that when the time comes we can send the forms to you and let you know when to send them in. If you go to our new website – www.saynotofpud.org – you can add your information to this list.

It is critical that everyone who opposes FPUD's takeover of our District get on to this list because this will be the best and fastest way to mobilize our ratepayers when the time comes! Please sign up today!

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**COMMITTEE VACANCIES**

RMWD is currently seeking new ideas from community volunteers that would like to serve on one or more of its three committees (Communications, Budget and Finance, Engineering).

Committee meetings are open to the public, and interested individuals may comment on items prior to consideration by the Committee. Once an item is voted on, the Committee forwards their recommendation on to the full Board of Directors for consideration.

The Budget and Finance Committee is responsible for the review of District finances and financial recordkeeping. They help prepare the annual operating budget, review water and sewer rates and fees, and scrutinize the District's annual audit.

The Communications Committee assists the Board and General Manager with internal and external public relations campaigns, preparation of the newsletters, community outreach and other public relations programs.

The Engineering Committee works with the District Engineer to review project need, feasibility and design, reviews construction plans and specification and prioritize the District's Capital Improvement Program.

If you are interested in volunteering to serve on one or more of RMWD committee, please contact Dawn Washburn at (760) 728-1178 Ext. 129.