



THE CASITAS WATER NEWS

Drought Continues for One More Year *People Urged to Protect Limited Local Water Supplies*

The Casitas Municipal Water District is asking customers to conserve more water. Western Ventura County is one of a few areas in Southern California that relies exclusively on local rainfall for its water supplies rather than on imported water, and those supplies are beginning to be impacted by the current drought. Western Ventura County includes the cities of Ojai and Ventura.



Without water conservation, Lake Casitas could go dry.

“People living and working in western Ventura County need to continue to conserve water to help sustain our local water supply during a long-term drought. All of our water is local so we need to be more thoughtful about how we use it,” said Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager for Casitas.

Lake Casitas dropped from being 89.9 percent full to 80.8 percent from May of 2008 to May of 2009. According to Casitas staff, the water level in the lake is expected to drop at an ever faster rate as local groundwater sources become depleted, which forces more water

customers to rely on Casitas as their backup water supply. Another dry year could drop lake levels below 70 percent.

In a long term drought, Casitas is unlikely to find additional water supplies from the State Water Project because there is no direct connection to those supplies and the State Water Project continues to face shortages.

Typically, more than 50 percent of a homeowner’s water usage goes to watering their lawn. Homeowners can save money and help the local water supply by reducing their lawn size and planting California native and drought-

tolerant plants. Casitas continues to offer assistance to local farmers, businesses and residents through a variety of water conservation rebates. Water conservation tips and rebate applications are available at www.casitaswater.org. Anyone interested in further information about ways to save water is urged to call Ron Merckling at 805-649-2251, extension 118.

State Budget Crisis Could Impact Casitas’ Revenues

The Casitas Municipal Water District is keeping a close eye on the State’s actions to fill a large budget gap. At risk for Casitas is the \$1.8 million in property taxes it receives each year, which supplements Casitas revenue for capital and maintenance projects. It also subsidizes agricultural water rates. Threats by the governor and legislature to borrow special districts, cities and counties property tax funds will prevent local government from providing current levels of service at the same cost. Until the State approves a budget, Casitas will keep water rates flat and continue to perform all maintenance and capital projects on schedule. Casitas will weigh its financial options if the State should pass a budget that takes revenues away.

Southland Facing Worst Drought in 18 Years

As the statewide drought worsens, many water agencies in the Southland are implementing mandatory water conservation restrictions for the summer that will impact 19 million Southern Californians. In fact, the state may mandate certain water conservation practices for all areas of California if new legislation is passed into law. State Assembly Member Mike Feuer from Los Angeles introduced Assembly Bill 49, which would require a 20 percent water conservation savings statewide by 2020.

Limited local water supplies and state mandates will require persons living and working in Western Ventura County to begin to change their relationship with water. Water conservation is a vital component to managing long term local water supplies and creating a sustainable way of life now and into the future.

New Weather Stations to Help Conserve Local Water Supplies



ET Station at Soule Park Golf Course.

Farmers, business owners and residents will be able to save more water by accessing up-to-the-minute weather data that will be made available on Casitas' Web site at www.casitaswater.org this summer. The weather data will provide information on how much water is needed for individual plants, landscapes or crops. Casitas has contracted with the Soule Park Golf Course to be able to broadcast the weather data from their weather station to Casitas' Web site, www.casitaswater.org. The data will be available on a continuous basis. The weather station offers Evapotranspiration (ET) data that will allow

customers to determine how much water they need to apply to various ground covers and plants on any specific day of the year. The weather station is surrounded by grass and is well maintained so that the data will be more accurate than any other weather data available in the Ojai Valley.

Casitas is also installing a weather station in the Rincon area because the climate varies significantly from the coastal region compared to the Ojai Valley. This information will also be available on Casitas' Web site this summer for all water customers who live at the beach or near the beach communities.

Regular Sprinkler Head Maintenance Saves Lots of Water and Money

Broken sprinkler heads can cause significant amounts of water loss over time. Maintaining sprinkler heads in good operating condition requires a regular monitoring plan. "Mowing the lawn, children playing and unintentional accidents are all likely causes for your sprinkler heads to get damaged," said Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager for Casitas. "It's not only the mini-geyser leaks that need to be repaired but also those sprinklers that are turned in the wrong direction or that sprinkler head which turned into a bubbler over night," Merckling said.



close to 100 gallons of water per 10-minute cycle, and that can add up to thousands of gallons of water per billing cycle. Broken sprinklers can also damage landscapes, property and plants, and that can also add up to significantly greater costs.

"It is important for us not to ignore or put off until tomorrow our water leaks. It can be relatively simple to repair a sprinkler head. When we are heading into a third-year drought we need to be more conscientious of our water usage and give a higher priority to our daily water conservation practices," said Merckling.

Now is a great time to check for leaks and reset your irrigation controller if you have not already done so.

Homeowners to Get Help With New Landscape Water-Wise Web Site

Casitas is working with GardenSoft Consulting to develop a link for Casitas' Web site that will offer garden tours of local homes. Detailed advice on how to plant water-wise gardens will be available with each garden tour option.

"This will be a great service for customers who want to create more exciting and beautiful landscapes for their homes that use less water," said Ron Merckling, Casitas' Water Conservation Manager. *Continued on page 7 >*

Endangered Steelhead Rescue Operations a Success

In May, federal and state agencies performed a rescue of steelhead trout from the dwindling pool on the lands owned by the Ojai Land Conservancy. The federal agency, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued themselves an emergency permit to handle and relocate the dozen trout to other areas of the Ventura River Watershed. Casitas' fisheries staff assisted with the trout relocation efforts. By mid-May of each year, the Ventura River, reaching from Myers Road (Meiners Oaks) to the confluence of San Antonio Creek, historically loses its surface flows and pools that support fish life. The approximate one hundred trout that were spotted in pools during April are thought to have migrated to either upper or lower reaches of the Ventura River. Casitas and the resource agencies are continuing to work together to recover steelhead populations in the Ventura River.



State and Federal personnel rescue endangered steelhead trapped in an enclosed pool

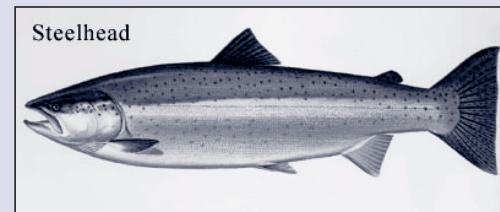
Water-Wise Web Site

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Detailed advice on how to plant water-wise gardens will be available with each garden tour option.

The new Web site will allow users to create accounts with specific plant types selected from a wide number of themed garden tours. Information on the site will provide detailed information on how to care for each plant type. The site should be available as a link on Casitas' Web site at www.casitaswater.org sometime this summer.



Anglers Warned – Fishing in the Ventura River Is Illegal

It is illegal to fish in the Ventura River below the Matilija Dam because of the risk to the endangered Southern California Steelhead. "Anyone caught fishing in the Ventura River faces penalties starting at \$1,900 to including a misdemeanor charge," said Scott Lewis, Casitas' Fisheries Biologist.

Anyone caught fishing illegally will be reported to the California Department of Fish and Game. "We are doing everything we can to bring back the endangered Southern California Steelhead to the Ventura River so it is important to prevent any needless harm to the small populations of steelhead in the river at this time," said Ron Merckling, Public Affairs Manager for the Casitas Municipal Water District.

Summer Astronomy Nights Return to Lake Casitas

Have you ever wanted to know more about our universe and the constellations? This summer, there will be several opportunities to stargaze with the whole family and learn more about the night sky. Stargazing evenings will be hosted by NASA-accredited astronomer Ernest Underhay, described by the Los Angeles Times as, "An astronomer with a fund of knowledge and a 'far out' sense of humor."

Participants are encouraged to bring blankets, chairs, binoculars and telescopes. Park entrance fees apply. For more information, please call 805-649-2233 or visit the Web site at www.lakecasitas.info, or e-mail Rob Weinerth, Park Services Officer, at rweinerth@casitaswater.com.

Location: Lake Casitas Recreation Area – Picnic Area #1

Time: 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Date: Saturn and Moon Night – June 27, 2009
Meteor Shower Night – July 11 and Aug. 8
Full Moon Night – Sept. 5

Casitas Water Adventure

Lake Casitas Recreation Area's Water Adventure to be open daily starting on Saturday, June 6, 2009.

Water Aerobics will be offered from June 15 to August 21. Please call 805-649-1122 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday for reservations or questions about Water Aerobics classes.



Casitas' Speakers Bureau: The Speakers Bureau provides an opportunity for customers and the community to learn more about water issues in the Western Ventura County area. Please contact Ron Merckling, Water Conservation and Public Affairs Manager, 805-649-2251, extension 118, to invite a speaker to your next community group or organizational meeting.

See Inside:

Steep Penalties for Anglers on the Ventura River



1055 Ventura Ave.
Oak View, CA 93022
805-649-2251
www.casitaswater.org

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The Casitas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet at 4:30 p.m. in the board room located in the main office at 1055 Ventura Ave., Oak View, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month.