

Free Landscape Classes

Please join us for one of our free Saturday morning classes to learn more about how you can save water and money.

- **Convert Your Turf** – from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, February 22, 2014. This workshop will provide training on how to remove turf and what aesthetic alternatives are available to replace your lawn.
- **Design with Native Gardens** – from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 17, 2014. This workshop will explore how to design beautiful landscapes with native plants.
- **Rainwater Capture/Graywater Workshop** – from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, August 16, 2014. This workshop is sure to answer all of your questions related to rainwater and graywater systems. You will learn how to install your own systems according to permit standards in Ventura County.

Please RSVP early at rmerckling@casitaswater.com or 805-649-2251 Extension 118.

Workshops will be held at Oak View Park & Resource Center (formerly the Oak View Elementary School) located at 555 Mahoney Avenue. Attendees are encouraged to park in the parking lots instead of the street.

The Casitas 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. Please visit the new and improved Water Wise Gardening in Ventura County website at www.ventura.watersavingplants.com.



Your Board in Action
 Bill Hicks, Division I
 James W. Word, Division II
 Pete Kaiser, Division III
 Mary Bergen, Division IV
 Russ Baggerly, Division V
 The Casitas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet at 3:00 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.

Join the Casitas Municipal Water District Facebook page to get the latest updates on water conservation and the Lake Casitas Recreation Area at: www.facebook.com/fbsitecasitasmunicipalwaterdistrict.

1055 Ventura Ave.
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www.casitaswater.org



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CASITAS WATER NEWS

Winter 2014

Historic Drought Strains Local Water Supplies



Lake Casitas is currently at 60% of full. Above is the Santa Ana boat ramp.

The State of California, Ventura County, and the Ventura River Watershed, begin 2014 in the grip of one of the driest recorded rain periods in history. Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency on January 17, 2014, calling on every Californian to reduce their water usage by 20%. The lack of rain recently has left Lake Casitas at less than sixty percent capacity, its lowest point in more than two decades. Without any significant additional rainfall this year, it is expected to decline to 50 percent capacity, a critical point at which Casitas will implement additional water conservation measures and actions to encourage less water use. Casitas is presently re-

viewing and revising these measures, and will provide additional information in the near future.

As the current drought continues, there is greater demand on Lake Casitas' water supply. Lake Casitas was built in the 1950s to be a back-up water supply to local groundwater supplies. Many of Casitas' resale agencies and agricultural customers that traditionally use groundwater supplies have started to use more of Casitas' water as their own groundwater supplies have diminished. "When the Ventura River Project was built by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1959, it was intended that Lake Casitas would be a supplemental

water supply during extended drought conditions, as local groundwater sources depleted," said Steve Wickstrum, general manager for the Casitas Municipal Water District.

Casitas encourages constituents throughout the district to use their water wisely through an active water conservation campaign that offers workshops, rebates for high water efficiency devices, and free agricultural, residential, and business water surveys.

Casitas' district boundaries encompass a population of approximately 70,000 residents, 5,800 acres of agriculture, and a wide variety of commercial and industrial businesses that are served by more than eight different public and private water providers. The area relies solely on local surface water and groundwater supplies. Unlike most of Southern California, there is no importation of State Water into the district's boundaries.

Anyone interested in finding out more information about incentives and programs is encouraged to visit Casitas' website at www.casitaswater.org or to call Ron Merckling at 805-649-2251 Extension 118.

Emergency Measures Implemented Due to Quagga Mussel Threat

Lake Casitas Recreation Area responded to the December 2013 discovery of invasive Quagga mussels at Lake Piru by implementing emergency actions to include subjecting all new vessels wishing to use Lake Casitas to a mandatory 35 day quarantine period.

The Casitas Municipal Water District Board on January 22, 2014 took additional action by calling on the California Natural Resources Agency to act on its authority to plan for the control or eradication of invasive mussels from Lake Piru. Lake Piru is the first lake in Southern California to get invasive mussels from a source, likely recreational boats, other than the Colorado River aqueduct. It is feared that any further spread of invasive mussels in Ventura County will result significant environmental and economic impacts.



Quagga sign post at Lake Casitas Recreation Area entrance gate.

Invasive mussels reproduce rapidly and attach themselves to hard surfaces. This creates maintenance problems related to keeping water intake structures operational. Invasive mussels cause additional damage to fisheries, watershed, and water quality because they are filter feeders that filter out food supply for most fish in a water body and allow for more favorable conditions for disruptive algal blooms. The only known eradication methods include drying out a lake or in the case of a

smaller water body with chemical treatment, options that would be difficult to implement at Lake Casitas.

Anyone interested in having their boat inspected at Lake Casitas, required before the 35 day quarantine period begins, is encouraged to make an appointment with the main gate at 805-649-2233 Extension 103.

Casitas to Offer Free Agricultural Irrigation Evaluations and Rebate Programs



Water efficient agricultural irrigation lines. Photo courtesy of Hunter Industries.

Casitas aims to further increase agricultural water use efficiency by offering a couple of additional programs to assist agricultural growers.

One program provides rebates to Casitas' agricultural customers up to \$650 per customer on equipment that will assist them to improve their irrigation efficiency. All eligible customers will first receive an irrigation evaluation by the Ventura County Resource Conservation District, which are currently offered at no cost.

The second program will fund free irrigation evaluations on hobby farms with less than two acres of planted crops, and provide rebates for water use efficiency equipment up to \$125 per customer.

Funds for these programs are limited. Irrigation evaluations and rebates will be provided on a first come first served basis. For additional information on how to participate, and on eligibility requirements and program terms and conditions, customers are urged to contact Ron Merckling at rmerckling@casitaswater.com or 805-649-2251 Extension 118 or to Ventura Resource Conservation District directly at info@vcrd.org or 805-764-5130.

How Can I Reduce My Water Use by 20%?

- Stop over watering plants, which causes them to have shallow roots, and trains them to want more water. Plants need to be more independent, which requires they receive less watering days but deeper soaks so roots grow further down into the soil.
- If you have a struggling tropical plant, consider replacing it with a drought tolerant plant that will thrive in its place. Or even better, plant a native plant that will benefit local butterflies, birds, and bees.
- Reduce or eliminate lawn areas.
- Mulch your landscape to help increase water retention in your soil. Mulch is any substance that provides cover over your landscape such as wood chips or rocks.
- Irrigate your landscape during early morning hours before wind and sunlight can evaporate most of your irrigation water.
- Maintain your irrigation system by checking it once a month! All irrigation systems need regular maintenance to remain efficient. Drip systems require constant maintenance to repair lines chewed by critters, emitters clogged by hard water, and emitters blown off by high water pressure. Even bubblers and spray valves can be damaged by lawn mowers and trimmers, children and cars, and sunlight.
- Install high efficiency toilets, washing machines, showerheads, and faucet aerators.
- Operate clothes washers and dishwashers with full loads.
- Do not let faucets run while brushing teeth and shaving.
- Call Casitas at 805-649-2251 Extension 118 to schedule a free home water saving survey.

Visit the following websites to find out more information: Casitaswater.org or Ventura.watersaving-plants.com

Lifeguards Needed!



The Lake Casitas Recreation Area is now accepting applications online for part-time lifeguards this summer to work at the Casitas Water Adventure. Applications can be downloaded at www.casitaswater.org under the employment tab. Applications can be mailed or turned in by hand to the front entrance of the Lake Casitas Recreation Area at 11311 Santa Ana Road, Ventura, California 93010, from now until the end of May.

