



# THE CASITAS WATER NEWS

## Voluntary Water Conservation Measures



A low-flow showerhead is one of several water-conservation devices available for free at Casitas' main office in Oak View.

A record low rainfall this year is already causing higher water demand on Lake Casitas. The more all water users in Western Ventura County conserve water the more likely the limited local water supplies can be extended throughout a long-term drought, and future water rationing avoided.

### How Can I Save Water in My Backyard?

Local residents have a great local resource to learn more about drought-resistant plants, wildlife habitats and natural plant-growing methods. The Ojai Community Demonstration Garden sits on a one-acre site featuring more than 900 plants. It is conveniently located next to Ojai City Hall on Ventura Street.

The garden offers self-guided tours. A large, colorful sign kiosk, designed to orient visitors to useful and exciting information about ways to manage their yards, stands in the center of the garden. For additional information about the garden, please contact the City of Ojai at (805) 640-2555.

### What Can You Do to Help?

#### Try to make small changes in your daily life, such as:

- Water your lawn in the early morning hours or in the evening, avoid mid day watering when evaporation is at its highest.
- Use a broom instead of the hose for cleaning sidewalks and patios.
- Check your sprinkler system for leaks and overspray. Update with drip or other more water efficient sprinklers where appropriate.
- Reduce the amount of water-thirsty grass, replace with less-thirsty native plants, permeable paving, or artificial turf products.
- For the grass you keep, set your lawnmower blade higher.
- Mulch. A layer of mulch material will even out soil temperature and allow for better water retention.
- Use on/off nozzles on all handheld hoses, keep your water supply from wasting down your street gutters.
- Convert high water use toilets and washing machines, partial rebates are available.
- Agricultural customers can sign-up to have their irrigation system surveyed by calling Ron Merckling at (805) 649-2251 Extension 118 or emailing at [rmerckling@casitaswater.com](mailto:rmerckling@casitaswater.com).
- These ideas and many more can be found at [Bewaterwise.com](http://Bewaterwise.com)

“Water conservation must be a part of every Southern Californian’s lifestyle, especially for people living in the Western Ventura County, which depends completely on a limited local water supply,” said Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager for the Casitas Municipal Water District.

devices are available at our main office located at 1055 Ventura Avenue in Oak View.

### What Else Can I Do to Help Make Our Limited Water Supply Last?

Please visit Casitas’ Web site at [www.casitaswater.org](http://www.casitaswater.org) for more water conservation suggestions or call Ron Merckling at (805) 649-2251. In addition, you will find information on all of our water conservation rebates and what free water conservation

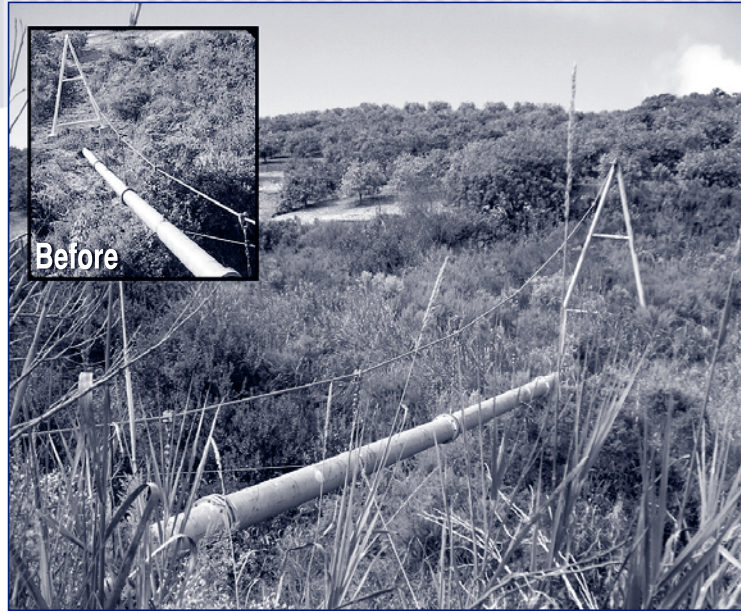
### Lake Casitas Recreation Area is now under the Social Host Ordinance of Ventura County

If you are staying at the Lake Casitas Recreation Area, be advised that the Social Host Ordinance will be enforced if you are hosting a gathering that involves the provision of alcohol and drugs to a minor attending the gathering.

# Aging Water System Demands More Maintenance and Upgrades



This photo depicts a worker at Casitas' Fairview reservoir tank, north of Meiners Oaks. The roof is being replaced as part of ongoing maintenance efforts.



Before and after photos of a pipeline span in the Rincon coastal area. This pipeline was stripped of old paint and repainted to protect it from rusting.

## Significant Maintenance and Upgrades Made to Water System

Casitas is continuously working to maintain and upgrade its water system. This is an essential part of our commitment to provide reliable water service to our customers.

Casitas' water distribution system requires a great deal of maintenance due to its complexity and size. Casitas has 135 miles of pipeline that ranges in diameter from six inches to 54 inches, nine pump plants and 13 steel covered reservoirs – most over 45 years old.

A large part of Casitas' budget goes toward maintenance and capital projects that ensure reliable water service. Some recent maintenance projects include the following.

## Reservoir Tank Repaired and Improved to Increase Water Reliability During an Earthquake

Over the past 42 years, the roof on the Fairview Reservoir tank, located north of Meiners Oaks, has become badly corroded. Also, the reservoir tank had to be upgraded to meet new earthquake standards. Casitas is spending \$700,500 to remove the existing coal tar enamel coating on the inside walls of the reservoir tank and replace it with an updated paint; remove and replace the roof; and install seismically-designed pipe interconnections to provide greater reinforcement to the tank

during an earthquake. Casitas plans to spend \$1 million per year for the next seven years to perform similar repairs on twelve other reservoir tanks.

## Building Repairs Made to Protect Water Delivery and Prevent Costly Problems

Several small buildings at Casitas' various pump plants are in need of repair due to weathering experienced over the years. Casitas workers recently repaired roofs and eaves and painted interior walls. These structures protect the pumps that deliver water into the Ojai Valley. Damage to the pumps could result in temporary water shut-offs and higher costs to customers.

## Old Valves Replaced to Protect Reliability of Water Service

Casitas' pipeline maintenance staff recently replaced large valves on the Matilija Conduit. These valves were nearly 60 years old and no longer worked. Since this repair involved shutting off the water, staff worked as quickly as possible to limit the amount of time customers would lack water service. The Matilija Conduit is a main water pipeline that serves customers in parts of Meiners Oaks and east Ojai. The new valves will allow Casitas' staff to restrict the number of customers impacted by a waterline break. Waterline breaks periodically occur for a variety of reasons, such as earthquakes or sudden water pressure changes.

## Pressure Filters Repaired to Ensure Highest Level of Water Quality

The Marion R. Walker Pressure Filtration Treatment Plant, which sits below Lake Casitas, filters the water from Lake Casitas through eight steel pressure vessels as part of the water treatment process. Each steel vessel is 50 feet long and 12 feet in diameter. After more than 10 years in operation, the vessels are starting to develop rust because their interior paint coating is wearing off. Casitas has contracted with a firm this year to work on two of the filter vessels. Workers will remove and clean the filter media, replace access ports and replace interior paint coating with an extra thickness strength coating. The cost is approximately \$320,000 to refurbish each filter vessel. Casitas has now completed work on three

of the eight filter vessels and plans to clean another vessel in 2008.

## Pipeline Corrosion Control Conducted to Protect Reliability of Water Delivery to Customers

Casitas conducts annual surveys of major water pipelines to find water leaks. We also replace coatings on selected valves and equipment. Exposure to air and moisture causes unprotected metal surfaces to corrode. Casitas will spend approximately \$50,000 per year maintaining the numerous exposed metal devices and equipment. This year the focus was on the water district's Rincon coastal area. Several vaults, a tank, and two pipe spans were stripped of old paint and recoated.

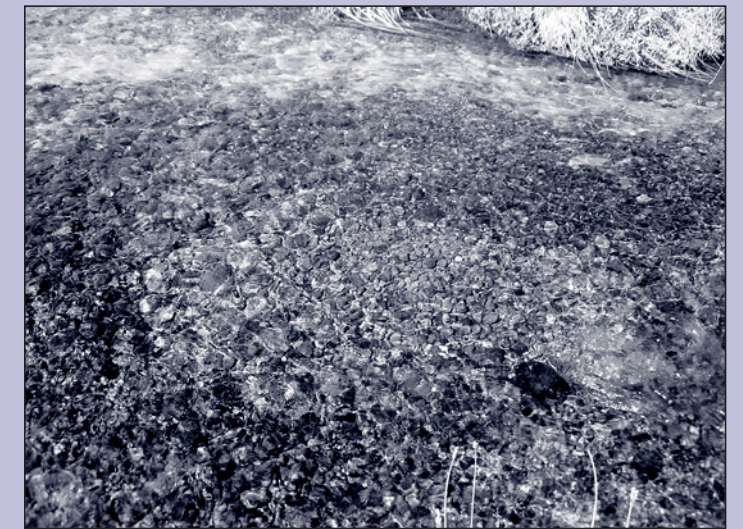
## Is there Evidence of Steelhead Spawning in the Ventura River Basin?

A spawning redd, which is a mound of gravel created by steelhead or rainbow trout when they lay their eggs during incubation, was recently found in the lower San Antonio Creek. Scott Lewis, Casitas' fisheries biologist, was conducting routine field-monitoring work when he came upon a redd site.

"A redd is created by a female fish when she turns her body sideways and rapidly fans the gravel to create a depression. She then lays her eggs in the depression and a male fish quickly moves in and fertilizes them. The female will move upstream of the depression and fan her tail again to cover the eggs up with gravel so they won't be swept downstream by the river's flow," explains Lewis.

It takes four to eight weeks, depending on water temperature, before the eggs will hatch. Steelhead will spend one to two years in freshwater. Juvenile fish will then migrate downstream to the ocean where they will spend one to two years growing into adults. In contrast, rainbow trout will live their entire lives in fresh water and spawn when they become adults.

The spawning redd Lewis found was approximately three feet long by one and a half feet wide. Lewis further explained, "Because of the size of the redd, it was most likely a rainbow trout that made the redd, and not an endangered Southern California steelhead. Steelhead redds are typically much larger and can easily reach over six feet long by three feet wide." Casitas will spend the next few months looking for additional redds and plans to do more extensive spawning surveys next year to estimate the total steelhead population in the Ventura River basin.



A redd (the lighter colored gravel area in the center of photo): A spawning site for steelhead or rainbow trout that was recently found in the San Antonio Creek.

# Family Fun Fishing Day at Lake Casitas

On Saturday, March 24, 2007, Casitas celebrated its 4th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day at Lake Casitas. Nearly 600 visitors attended the festivities. The event featured trout stocking, face painting, casting games and a huge raffle. Additional participants included emergency response units; Sheriff's Department police dogs; California Department of Fish and Game wardens and a biologist; the Sespe Fly Club; University of California Santa Barbara Rowing; CS Rowing; the Ventura Disc Golf Club; the West Coast Christian Anglers; and the Rio Mesa High School Fishing Club. For many children, this was their first time catching a fish!



Crowds at Lake Casitas Recreation Area enjoyed Family Fun Fishing Day held in March.

**CASITAS SPEAKERS BUREAU:** Casitas is committed to our community. As part of our efforts to better serve you, we created the Casitas Speakers Bureau to provide our customers and the community with an even greater opportunity to learn more about water issues in our area. If your community group or organization would like to invite a speaker to a meeting, please contact Ron Merckling, Water Conservation and Public Affairs Manager, at 805-649-2251, ext. 118.

## In this Issue: Learn How Casitas Is Committed to Maintenance and Capital Upgrades to Protect Customers' Water Supply, Quality and Reliability



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### Your Board in Action

**Bill Hicks**, Division I  
**James W. Word**, Division II  
**Pete Kaiser**, Division III  
**Richard Handley**, Division IV  
**Russ Baggerly**, Division V

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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month.