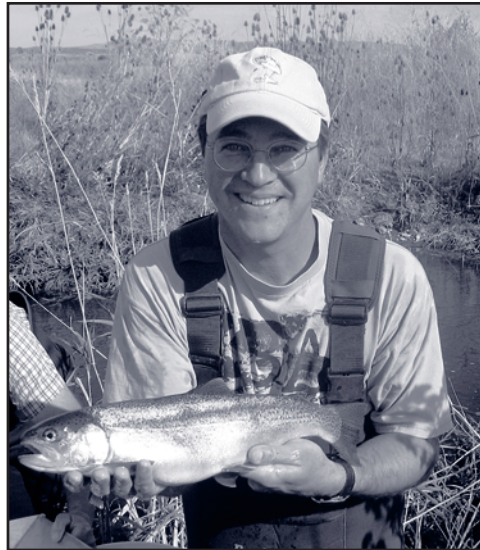


## Work on Steelhead Fish Recovery to Intensify

You may be able to see steelhead swimming up the Ventura River in the near future. Casitas recently stepped up its steelhead recovery efforts by hiring Scott Lewis as the new Fisheries Biologist Program Manager on April 3. Lewis will lead Casitas' amplified steelhead recovery efforts. He will research and monitor endangered Southern California Steelhead in the Ventura River and continue the implementation of state and federal regulatory requirements for water diversions and operation of the fish passage system located at Casitas' Robles Diversion facility on the Ventura River. Lewis will also manage and work with Casitas' three fisheries technicians.

"Our goal is to move from speculation to solid fisheries science in the Ventura River so we can better enhance the steelhead population," Lewis said.

"I am looking forward to the challenge of working in the Ventura River



*Scott Lewis, New Fisheries Biologist at Lake Casitas.*

Watershed to help with the recovery of the endangered steelhead," Lewis said further. "There is a great deal of work already invested in the restoration effort and I hope to provide a positive influence to further those efforts."

Added Casitas General Manager John Johnson, "The Casitas Municipal Water District's Board of Directors is fully committed to the success of the fish passage facility and to the recovery of steelhead on the Ventura River."

Casitas' efforts on the Ventura River will be assessed by regulatory agencies during the next five years. The results of this assessment will determine whether Casitas needs to release more water down the Ventura River to assist the steelhead population.

Lewis' career in fisheries biology spans a period of more than 16 years. He brings to Casitas a comprehensive set of skills that include work with steelhead, rainbow trout, Chinook and sockeye salmon, and bull trout in Oregon. Lewis received his Bachelor of Science degree and Master of Science degree in Fisheries Science from Oregon State University. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Fisheries Science.

### Upcoming Events

 **Casitas Water Adventure**  
Open daily from June 18  
through Labor Day  
Weekend.

 **Ventura County Comets**  
**Model Airplane Club**  
will host the Warbird  
Invitational on July 15.

 **The Pirate Faire & Fall**  
**Renaissance Festival**  
September 23-24.

For more information visit our Web site  
[www.lakecasitas.info](http://www.lakecasitas.info)

### Better Balance of Representation Sought for Five Board Member Divisions

In May, Casitas' Board of Directors voted to support some minor boundary revisions for the District's five divisions to correct a population disparity that had existed between the divisions. In some cases, the population difference between divisions was greater than 25 percent. The new boundaries should meet Casitas' legal requirements by ensuring a balance in the number of people who live in each division.

Maps of each division change are available on Casitas' Web site at [www.casitaswater.org](http://www.casitaswater.org). For additional information, please call Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager, at 649-2251, ext. 118.

# Focus on Long-term Solutions

## Board Works to Keep Your Water Rates Down



Casitas invests extensively to maintain its infrastructure. For example, Casitas recently replaced many of its aging pumps and upgraded its pumping facilities at a cost of more than \$2 million.

Casitas Municipal Water District faced escalating fish passage facility, maintenance, and water conservation costs this year. The Board met throughout May and June to creatively tackle these costs concerns. The Board supported strategic cost savings to try and keep water revenue increases to roughly nine percent or under for the 2006-07 fiscal year.

Several factors have contributed to the current budget difficulties. Casitas' non-restricted reserve funds have largely been depleted with the expenditure of millions of dollars to construct the Robles Fish Passage Facility. The size of any rate hike will largely depend upon how much of Casitas' diminishing reserve funds are tapped to balance the

budget. The reserve fund has been reduced by millions of dollars due to the construction of the Robles Fish Passage Facility. The District is also now spending hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to operate the new facility and to support the steelhead enhancement program.

Casitas invests extensively to maintain its infrastructure that is necessary to provide reliable water service to customers. For example, Casitas recently replaced many of its aging pumps and upgraded its pumping facilities at a cost of more than \$2 million. Pump Check, a pump testing consulting firm, recently tested Casitas' pumps and found that the pumps have the highest efficiency of any agency they tested during their 48 years in business. Efficiently operating pumps means dollar savings for Casitas because it significantly reduces electrical charges for the District.

Casitas recently expanded its water conservation efforts to address the lack of water supply available during a long-term drought. Casitas implemented several Water Conservation Best Management Practices that include providing a variety of water conservation devices to residential, business and institutional customers such as schools and hospitals. Purchasing a large number of ultra low-flush toilets, showerheads, kitchen and bathroom faucet aerators and toilet flappers has contributed to the current budgetary constraints.

The Board is closely examining the fisheries, maintenance, and water conservation costs to ensure that the most economical solutions available can be incorporated into the final adopted 2006-07 budget.

## Recreation Area to Focus on Family Environment With New Safety Program

Casitas' Board of Directors has adopted the Park Incident Reduction Program for the Lake Casitas Recreation Area to increase public safety for all park visitors and to further promote a greater family environment.

The program will increase the presence of uniformed staff patrolling the park. Uniformed park staff will be encouraged to answer questions and provide support to all park visitors rather than act only as strict enforcers of the park's rules and ordinances.

Casitas has implemented this comprehensive public safety program to address customer complaints about unruly visitors at the Lake Casitas Recreation Area. This safety program will target repeat



Park Services Officer Vanessa Mares hands out a park information pamphlet to Park Hosts Gene and Betty Strain.

offenders of the park's ordinances with more timely and firm responses that may include eviction from the park.

The program will use a four-pronged approach designed to increase safety for families and other visitors at the park. The program will include early notification, early eviction, Sheriff/California Highway Patrol support and citations:

- ✓ Early Notification – Park staff will hand out printed information to all park visitors that will indicate, "...for your safety and enjoyment,

uniformed park staff will strictly enforce all park rules and regulations. Enforcement may include citation and eviction from the facility." This advance *Continued on page 4* ➤

# to Address Customer Concerns

## Casitas Responds to Many Steelhead Recovery Challenges

While the Board has dedicated significant resources toward the success of the fish passage, the Ventura River system regularly poses constant natural challenges for the Robles Fish Passage facility operations due to the sporadic and oftentimes tremendous river flows during the rainy season. Although, in the summer months, it can go bone dry. The Fish Passage Facility has fish screens that prevent steelhead from entering the Robles Diversion Canal which channels water to Lake Casitas.

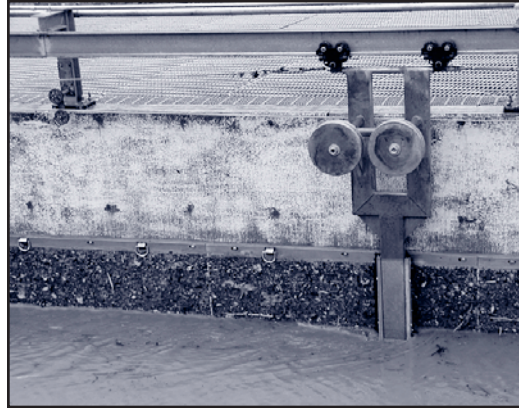
The fish screens get clogged up during heavy river flows because the brushes that are designed to keep the screens clean, have not worked very well. As a result, less water has been diverted to Lake Casitas. Casitas plans to solve this problem by examining possible new designs to clean the screens or by designing new screens.

### Well Rounded Approach Adopted to Aid Steelhead Migration

Casitas has dedicated significant resources to implement and adhere to a multi-level plan to restore the resilient Steelhead and its habitat within the river. This plan includes state and federal guidelines to manage water diversions and releases, which are designed to provide for steelhead population recovery. Casitas has coordinated efforts with ecosystem planners to minimize impacts to and, in fact, enhance key habitats where both the steelhead and other native species will thrive. Casitas continues to take action to honor its commitment to environmental stewardship.

### Recent Fish Migration Successes

This year, Casitas confirmed eight sightings of trout migrating upstream through the fish passage. This exciting



*Fish passage screens clogged.*



*Fish passage screens cleaned.*

observation is the start of a new era on the Ventura River. Casitas is hopeful the California Department of Fish and Game and National Marine Fisheries Service will be able to confirm these and future sightings as endangered Southern California Steelhead.

### What is the Difference Between Rainbow Trout and Steelhead?

Why should we be excited that trout were spotted swimming upstream through the Robles Fish Passage Facility? The answer is because they could be endangered Southern California Steelhead. How is that possible? A rainbow trout is considered a freshwater fish that lives its entire life in one river system. A steelhead trout is a trout that goes through a physiological change that allows it to leave its freshwater environment and live in the ocean. A steelhead will grow to a much larger size than a rainbow trout because it has access to a larger food supply in the ocean. A steelhead, after reaching adulthood, will leave the ocean and swim up its natal freshwater stream to spawn and to restart the lifecycle.

What is the difference between a trout that goes to the ocean and a trout that stays in a freshwater system? There is no

clear answer. In fact, there could be two sibling trout where one could become a rainbow trout and the other could become a steelhead trout. Scientists have yet to determine what triggers a trout to change and then enter the ocean. It could relate to trout population density, availability of food, water temperature, river flows, or a combination of these or other factors. A larger number of trout living in a river system that has access to the ocean might be related to the number of steelhead that will be present. So, an increase in the number of trout may result in an increase in the number of steelhead in the Ventura River.

### Collaborative Approach Needed for Success

Casitas looks forward to continuing efforts to enhance the overall Ventura River habitat with the hope to reestablish Southern California Steelhead and its supportive ecosystem. The ultimate successful restoration of native steelhead and meeting the many challenges that may remain ahead of us, rests not only in collaboration between local, state and federal agencies, but also with the affirmative support of citizens and community groups. This includes the continued commitment by everyone in our community to adhere to water conservation practices in their daily lives.

# New Safety Program

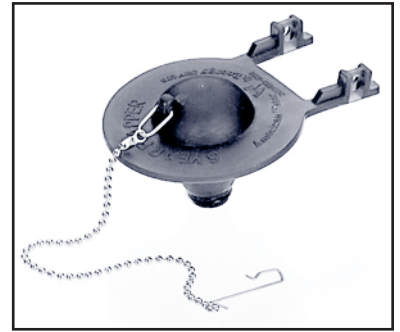
Continued from page 2

warning will be clearly posted throughout the park.

- ✓ Early Evictions – Uniformed park staff may evict a disruptive individual from the park based upon an initial complaint if necessary – rather than returning after receiving a second or third complaint – prior to eviction proceedings. This procedure will result in far less staff-time committed to unruly park visitors who repeatedly disrupt other customers, and it will free up patrol time so staff members may have more positive contact with the vast majority of park visitors.
- ✓ Sheriff/CHP Support – Casitas has developed a local Sheriff and CHP support program to assist with all early eviction operations. This includes dealing with people who use or misuse alcohol. As part of this program, all evicted customers will be escorted to the front gate where they will be offered assistance in finding alternate transportation from a sober driver. The goal is to prevent intoxicated visitors from returning to the park and causing further disruptions.
- ✓ Citation Program- Casitas will implement an in-house, one-year citation pilot program based on the current fine schedule for violations of park ordinances. It would be limited to park ordinances only.

## A Closer Look at Wise Water Use

Leaky toilets are more than a nuisance. They waste water and cost you money. Casitas is giving away toilet leak detection kits that include blue dye tablets. Place one in your toilet tank and wait for 15 minutes. If the blue color appears in your toilet bowl, you have a leak. You may be able to remedy the problem by installing a new toilet flapper. These parts usually do not last for more than five years.



Free toilet flappers are now available at Casitas' main office in Oak View.

More good news! Casitas has free toilet flappers that may help repair those leaky toilets. Casitas is also giving away to anyone living in the Casitas district boundaries other high-performance water-conservation devices that include bathroom faucet aerators, kitchen faucet aerators and showerheads. If you received this newsletter, you probably live in the Casitas District. You may pick up these devices at the District's main office between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Where can I pick-up these free high-performance water conservation devices?

Casitas MWD (main office)

1055 Ventura Avenue, Oak View, California, 93022

Phone: 805-649-2251

Would you like a speaker to come and talk to your classroom, organization or business? Please call Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Coordinator, at 805-649-2251 ext. 118 or [rmerckling@casitaswater.com](mailto:rmerckling@casitaswater.com), to talk about water conservation.

## Trout (Future Steelhead?) that Use Fish Passage Facility Offer Hope for Steelhead Recovery.



1055 Ventura Ave.  
Oak View, CA 93022  
805-649-2251  
[www.casitaswater.org](http://www.casitaswater.org)

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### Your Board in Action

**Bill Hicks**, Division I  
**James W. Word**, Division II  
**Pete Kaiser**, Division III  
**Charles Bennett**, Division IV  
**Russ Baggerly**, Division V  
**John J. Johnson**, General Manager

The Casitas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet at 3 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.

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