

Why Not Reduce the Lawn?

When you look outside at your yard have you asked yourself how much of it do I really need? To begin, ask yourself how much of my grassy area is being used by the kids or pets? Remember that shrinking or removing your lawn all together is going to save a significant amount of water and will reduce your maintenance (the mowing grind). California lawns are the number one user of residential water use. A typical single-family residence will use more than half of its water use outside.

What are the neighbors going to think and what about my property value? Neighbors and prospective home buyers are going to appreciate an aesthetically pleasing low maintenance landscape.

Landscapes can be designed to complement and enhance your home's architectural style. Many examples of drought tolerant landscapes from Ventura County are available on the Casitas sponsored water wise gardening website at: <http://www.ventura.watersaving-plants.com/ventura1.php>. The website allows you to build a database of plants and their specifications that you can save for future reference. This should help you make the switch from a thirsty turf to a beautiful landscape that can be more fragrant and colorful, and if you wish attract butterflies and birds.

If you do plan to have some grass make sure it is a lower water use grass such as Bermuda, St.

Augustine or Zoysia rather than a high water use Bluegrass, Fescue or Rye. Keeping your grass in a shaded area will help reduce water use as well.

Reminder: Re-check your sprinklers to make sure they are working properly before the higher water use season.

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.

See Inside: Annual Water Quality Report

Your Board in Action

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.

Bill Hicks, Division I
James W. Word, Division II
Pete Kaiser, Division III
Mary Bergen, Division IV
Russ Baggerly, Division V

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.



PRSRT-STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oxnard, Ca.
Permit # 1839

ECRWSS



Property Tax Transfer Proposal Would Increase Water Rates

Casitas closely monitors the state legislative process to advocate for its water rate payers. Once again, this year there was another proposal to take dollars away from special districts such as Casitas. The State Assembly Committee on Accountability and Administrative Review considered a well intentioned proposal by California Forward, *Making California Work Again: Restructuring State-Local Relationships* that proposes to restructure state and local government to ensure local government is more accountable to the public. One of the specific recommendations included revising the property tax allocation system, which could, if approved result in Casitas' \$1.8 million in property taxes being allo-

cated to the County. **This would cause a 30 percent water rate increase for Casitas' customers.** Casitas is working with the California Special Districts Association and the Association of California Water Agencies to educate and inform legislators about the effectiveness of special districts in providing services at the local government level. Representatives of the Casitas Board of Directors and staff met with the offices of Assembly Member Das Williams, Assembly Member Jeff Gorell, and State Senator Tony Strickland to address California Forward's proposal and its potential impact on Casitas' rate payers.

The California Forward report

recommends that cities and counties have oversight for special districts within their boundaries and further suggests that property tax funding be stripped from special districts, even if they provide services such as fire protection or water. "The California Forward mindset is that special districts such as Casitas are disconnected from the public and cities and that counties could better manage our funds or run our services," said Ron Merckling, Public Affairs Manager. "Casitas is providing a service for a cost that is competitive with any public or private agency in the state. We work to do it in the most transparent way possible so any proposal that aims to improve upon our efforts should at the least not reduce the level of service or increase the cost to the public," said Merckling. The California Forward report ignores one of the most important qualities of special districts, their ability to organize across city and county boundaries. No other form of local government provides services on a regional basis, but the California Forward report specifically excludes special districts from their vision of regional governance.

A copy of California Forward's proposal can be found at: <http://www.acwa.com/sites/default/files/news/state-budget-fees/2011/04/ca-forward-recs-3-8->

Lake Casitas Recreation Area

Coyote Point Disc Golf Course
Founded and Maintained by the Ventura Disc Golf Club
Rated #1 in California Come Play It!

Water System Repairs

The maintenance of a water system does occasionally require temporary water outages for customers. The challenge for every water agency is to perform timely maintenance to prevent catastrophic repairs and replacements, and to minimize the water outage time for customers. This spring, Casitas replaced a section of the Rincon Main, installed a fire hydrant on Reeves Road, and performed routine inspection of the Casitas Dam intake works, all requiring temporary water outages for several service areas. While working on the water system, Casitas was also modifying and repairing electrical and mechanical components at several pump plants. Casitas was able

to complete the necessary work and continue its mission to provide reliable water service with the cooperation and patience of customers. Customer calls and comments received during the outages are valued and do assist us in minimizing the impact of these activities. Casitas appreciates each and every customer's water interest.

If you see any water system problems, please do not hesitate to call Casitas or your local water purveyor for an immediate response and repair. Casitas' phone number is 805-649-2251.

Focus on Safety

Casitas is working hard to make all operations at the district safer than ever. In the last fiscal year, Casitas' rate of employee work-related injuries dropped more than fifty percent. This recent success can be attributed to both Mark Passamani, the District's new Safety Manager and to employees' increased focus on safety awareness and additional safety training. A new online training program allows employees more flexibility in completing safety training. Casitas continues to revamp regular safety reviews and tailgate sessions to address hazards employees may encounter in the field.

"We work to address safety issues before a project begins so employees or contractors are aware of all the potential hazards for a given job and how to reduce the likelihood of an injury occurring," stated Passamani. Casitas will continue to build on recent successes to ensure employees, contractors, and the public remain safe during Casitas' on going operations.



Employees from an outside contractor measure oxygen content prior to entering a confined space during a recent water inlet works inspection at Casitas Dam.

Local Family Takes Action to Limit Water Use



Many local residents have taken action to conserve water in their landscapes. Nancy and Michael Krumptschmidt recently changed their landscape to conserve more water. They created an aesthetically pleasing landscape, which did not involve removing all of their grass, and then planting cacti.

They optimized their turf area by removing areas that they did not use. They left enough for their grandchildren and dog to play on and for them to walk barefoot in the yard. The removed lawn was replaced with a variety of drought resistant plants, many with colorful flowers. The soil is amply shielded from evaporation losses by several inches of mulch, and the plants are irrigated with a drip line system. They di-



Mr. Michael Krumptschmidt standing in his lush drought tolerant landscape.

verted a gutter down spout into their remaining grass area, and use individually adjustable spray heads to irrigate. Michael is careful to water in the early morning hours before high sun heat and wind cause evaporation losses. Michael carefully hand waters to ensure no runoff occurs.

Michael recently designed and built a storm water collection system with a 5,000 gallon holding tank. Almost all of the rain from the roof drains into their gutters where it is filtered before entering their collection barrel system. The water then travels to their large tank on a lower level of the property. From there, the water is pumped up to irrigate their landscape. An added benefit of the large tank is that it is fitted with fire department compatible connections, so it can be used by the fire department if needed. The system became operational this year and the season's storms easily filled the tank.

An advertisement for Lake Casitas Water Adventure. The ad features a blue background with white clouds and blue arrows. At the top, it says "CASITAS Water Adventure". Below this, it says "Look what's new in the Ojai Valley!!!". There are three circular photos: one of a pool area, one of people swimming, and one of a child. The text includes "Now Enrolling!!!", "Junior Lifeguard Summer Program Ages 9-14", and "Adult Water Exercise Program". It also provides contact information: "visit us on the web at: www.lakecasitas.info" and "or give us a call at: (805)649-1122".