

IWVWD General Manager's Column
June 25, 2014

IWV Responds to Governor's Drought Declaration

By Don Zdeba

Since Governor Jerry Brown declared a statewide drought emergency January 17th of this year and called on Californians to cut their water use by 20 percent, we now have information from a survey conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board that finds statewide urban water usage is down just 5 percent between January and May compared to the previous three years. This is significantly less than the 20 percent requested. The survey found more than half of the 270 water agencies responding have formally implemented drought or water shortage plans. Among the results reported, the Sacramento Valley region reports the highest conservation rate so far at 10 percent. Results from other regions include an overall 7 percent reduction in the San Joaquin Valley, 5 percent reduction in the South Coast area, 2 percent in the Bay Area, and virtually no change on the Central Coast.

Locally, we have recently achieved significant conservation results, though well below the 20 percent requested by the Governor. Water production declined close to 9 percent in April and 8 percent in May when compared to the previous year. This amounts to a savings of about 36,351,000 gallons in just two months. That's enough to supply the current annual average use of 117 families of four in Ridgecrest. When we look more closely at the data we find there has been a long-term trend toward reduction in water use well before the declaration of drought. During the period from 1998 to 2007, the average water use per person for Indian Wells Valley Water District customers was 264 gallons. The past two years, that number has averaged 214 gallons, a 19 percent reduction.

There are certainly opportunities to reduce water use even more as evidenced by the runoff one can observe as you drive our city streets. The water runoff is indicative of the fact that we have areas of town where overwatering and/or misadjusted sprinklers are an issue. We should all be checking our irrigation system routinely to ensure we are minimizing overspray and also that we are not watering excessively. The water we observe running down our streets is not only wasteful, but can ultimately cause costly damage to our streets and curbs.

Conservation is certainly one of the tools available in the tool box to address the state's water shortage, but as Dave Bolland with the Association of California Water Agencies states, "While saving water is good, the state can't conserve its way out of its water shortage problem." Recycled water, storm water capture, ground water remediation, desalination, new storage, water importation, surface and ground water, are all part of a total package. The Water Availability and Conservation Report for the Indian Wells Valley commissioned by Kern County and issued by Todd Groundwater earlier this year addresses these water management alternatives in the context of local application. If you have not read this report, I would encourage you to do so. It is available on the Kern

County Planning and Development website at <http://pcd.kerndsa.com/planning/latest-planning-news/336-iwvrop-water-report>

A meeting regarding the local water situation was hosted by Kern County Planning and Development staff May 15th with major stakeholders representing a broad range of interests in attendance. The purpose was to develop and prioritize a path forward that will insure sustainability of our community and protect the mission at China Lake NAWS. The resulting discussions are being summarized in a draft report that is expected to be available for review and comment next month.

For tips on how you can reduce your water consumption or to report water waste, please visit the District's website at www.iwvwd.com.