

**IWVWD PRESS RELEASE** – June 19, 2008  
Tom Mulvihill, June GM Column

### **It's Official: California in "Drought Emergency"**

It's finally official: on June 11, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed that California was in a "condition of statewide drought." Since then, he has gone further by declaring a "drought emergency" and mentioned Kern County specifically. Acknowledging the current years-long lower than normal rain and snowfall in most counties and the cutback on water shipments both from the Colorado River and the State Water Project, the governor also mentioned "severe water shortages" and has referred to the situation as a "crisis."

In the wake of this declaration, water purveyors from Fresno to San Diego have been implementing "water emergency" plans, most of which were drawn up in the early 1990s – the last time a statewide drought was declared. That one hung on doggedly for about five years and caused huge financial losses, especially to agriculture.

Of course, unlike most Californians, the residents of the Indian Wells Valley are not directly dependent on outside sources for our day-to-day water supply. Our sole provider is our aquifer - natural water storage 100s of feet beneath the earth's surface. However, Valley residents are using more water from the aquifer than is being replenished – and have done so for decades, as demonstrated by the steady drop of our water table over time. Because of this, it is the opinion of the IWV Cooperative Ground Water Management Group and the Indian Wells Valley Water District Board that our cache of fresh water is finite and must be prudently managed to help ensure an adequate and affordable supply down the road.

The Environmental Protection Agency has predicted that, within the next 10 or so years, 35 additional states will face water crises. This means water will become even more precious. When you add to this scenario the expense of state mandated arsenic treatment as well as brackish water treatment technology – significant and climbing – and the probability that this Valley will have to import water in the future – another costly proposition – it becomes strikingly clear that the cost of providing water is going UP. Way up. Put in this perspective, the concept of water conservation makes even greater sense now than at any other time in America's history. And it makes sense here.

In order to prevent the desperate situation now occurring statewide from impacting us, our children and grandchildren, we urge you to take the following steps:

- Replace grass with drought resistant plants or man-made turf. Grass is the most irrigated crop in America but has little practical value. If you do have sod, only water when necessary. Note: If you step on your lawn and the blades spring back, they don't need additional water. (Most grasses can get by with irrigation three to five times per week, even in the dead of summer.) To prevent excessive evaporation, water between 7 PM and 8 AM.

- Use a broom to clean driveways and other cemented areas.
- Use a cover on pools and spas. It prevents evaporation.
- Only run the washing machine and dish washer with full loads. This strategy will also contribute to lower gas and electric bills.
- Fix leaks inside and out as soon as you discover them. Note: You should examine your sprinkler system each month for broken pipes or sprinkler heads.

There are literally hundreds of other ways to cut down on water use. We have many free publications outlining great conservation ideas and also hand out water efficient shower heads, kitchen faucets and other water saving devices. We can even provide water awareness presentations for your church group, service organization or Scout troop.

Many experts dealing with water issues across the globe feel we all should conserve water as a matter of course. The Water District agrees. It is by far our most precious resource – the one thing life cannot do without.

If you would like more information about this subject, please contact us at 375-5086. Your Indian Wells Valley Water District is here to serve you.