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**Drought Over? IWV Water Conservation Still Vital**

Last week, California Governor Jerry Brown officially rescinded the drought declaration made in 2008 by Arnold Schwarzenegger. With record rainfall, full reservoirs and snowpack at 165 percent of normal in parts of the Sierra, this seems like a logical move. But appropriately, the governor remains cautious: “While this season’s storms have lifted us out of drought, it’s critical that Californians continue to watch their water use. Drought or no drought, demand for water in California always exceeds supply.”

Let’s take a closer look.

Most Central and Southern California water agencies import water via the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the State Water Project and/or the Colorado River Aqueduct. And whatever the next few years’ weather patterns bring to this state, research conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles in conjunction with the University of Arizona has come up with some startling findings: over the past 11,000 or so years, droughts of 30-60 years have not been unusual in this region and even 150-year droughts have occurred! Eventually, dry days, months, years and even decades will come again and water conservation in the interim is a key strategy to ensure a safe and ample water supply.

Here in the Indian Wells Valley, we are unique when compared to other California communities of our size. Unlike the norm, we have only one source of water – our aquifer. There is universal agreement that water extraction in our valley by the Water District, NAWA China Lake, Searles Valley Minerals, private and small system well owners, farmers, and others approaches 30,000 acre feet annually. An AB 303 funded study conducted in 2005 (official report released in April 2010) obtained new data, reviewed and qualified existing data, and reaffirmed that conventional estimates for total basin recharge of between 5,000 and 11,000 acre feet per year are reliable and should be used for the management of our valuable water resource. Indeed, groundwater levels have been dropping here without recovery since the 1960s, resulting from far greater usage than recharge for almost 50 years.

Water efficiency and water conservation are just as important today in the IWV as they were before last week. We must preserve our water resource if we are to provide safe and affordable water to our children and grandchildren so they can in turn enjoy the abundant lifestyle we have all become accustomed to here. No one knows how much water our aquifer contains or what percentage is drinkable and what percentage is brackish. We do know that the Water District is currently producing water for your home or business for about \$200 per acre foot and that brackish water treatment would cost over 12 times that! Other alternate water sources would be just as costly.

Wasting precious natural resources is never sound fiscal practice and doesn’t allow for reliable long term planning. That’s why the IWVWD is committed to prudent water management today and tomorrow. So, if we can help you become more water wise through any of our many programs, it is our pleasure to do so. The Indian Wells Valley Water District is here to serve you ... and your children and grandchildren.