

IWVWD General Manager's Column
May 6, 2015

MANDATORY CONSERVATION TARGET REQUIRES COOPERATION

By Don Zdeba

With California facing a fourth consecutive year of drought conditions and a minuscule 5% of normal snowpack in the Sierra at the traditional April 1st measurement, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) adopted mandatory restrictions at the Board's May 5th meeting intended to result in a statewide 25% reduction in urban potable water use. These restrictions have been in development for weeks and follow pushback by several urban water suppliers as well as members of the public. More than 250 comments were received following the initial draft released April 7th including an e-mail I sent on behalf of Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD). The SWRCB considered many of the suggestions and comments and re-issued the draft regulations April 17th increasing the number of conservation tiers from four to nine. Another 300 comments were received. In response, I sent a six page letter to the State Board explaining some of the reasons for IWVWD having a residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) landing us in the proposed ninth and highest tier requiring a 36% conservation target. I also pointed out the proposed conservation target neglects to recognize the 20% reduction in usage achieved by our customers from 2007 to 2013.

As residents know, factors that contribute to our relative high G-CPD include being a rural community with some of our customers owning large parcels that require more water to irrigate the landscaping, but also enables them to board horses and other animals that consume water. Also, high temperatures and low humidity make evaporative cooling the most energy efficient and primary method for cooling residences and businesses. According to a study by the University of Arizona's Office of Arid Lands Studies, "the percentage of household water used by the coolers was 25.8% for households without air conditioning, and 15.8% for all houses." This study also states, depending on size, air movement, and relative humidity, seasonal water use for evaporative coolers can range from 7,350 to 22,050 gallons per cooler, or 35 to 100 gallons per day assuming 212 days of use.

In the final regulations adopted by the State Board, IWVWD remained in the ninth tier with a 36% conservation target. This means the State will be monitoring our water usage from June through November and comparing it to the same period of time in 2013, the year being used as the baseline. In anticipation and response of this requirement, the Board of Directors adopted Ordinance 97, Emergency Water Conservation Regulation, at their April 13th meeting to implement the mandatory actions enacted by the State Board. Many of these actions are carryovers from the restrictions implemented last year, however the most significant new action is the implementation of a three day per week watering schedule to comply with the draft State Board mandate that there must be a limit on the number of days outdoor irrigation is allowed. With outdoor landscaping estimated at anywhere from 50% to 65% of residential water use, the opportunity to achieve the

largest savings and attain our established conservation standard of 36% is reducing outdoor watering.

This week, mailers were sent to all customers of IWVWD, including commercial and public. The mailers contain information on the watering schedule adopted in Ordinance 97 and information on the new Cash for Grass Program being implemented. Although Ordinance 97 became effective when the Board adopted it April 13th, we have been using the time since to publicize the new restrictions and allow our customers time to adapt to the new watering schedule. Beginning next week, we will be focusing on compliance. It is critical that we all cooperate to achieve our assigned conservation target. We will be reporting our results to the SWRCB monthly, including enforcement actions. If we do not meet our assigned goal, they will no doubt focus on the efforts we made to achieve compliance. If we cannot demonstrate we have made sufficient effort, the State Board will have the option to issue fines to our District of up to \$10,000 each day we continue to be out of compliance. Guess where the money to pay those fines will come from...us customers. I ask that we all pull together as a community and comply with the watering schedule in Ordinance 97 as well as modifying other behaviors involving water use so we can demonstrate our community has done its best to contribute to the statewide goal.

For more information on Ordinance 97, conservation tips, and water-related news, please visit our website, www.iwvwd.com.