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EID Board Declares Stage 1 Drought

Placerville, CA... Citing the third dry year in a row and uncertainties about water deliveries from Folsom Reservoir, as well as Governor Schwarzenegger's proclamation of a statewide drought emergency, the El Dorado Irrigation District (District) Board of Directors today declared a stage 1 drought for the District's service area.

"Recent rain and snowfall aside, California is facing the third dry year in a row," said Board President George Wheeldon. "And it looks like the amount of water in our contracts with the Bureau of Reclamation at Folsom Lake will be cut back more than last year. Even though Jenkinson Lake in Sly Park is close to filling, we don't want to move too much water from there to serve the western end of our service area in case 2010 is another dry year. Plus the amount of water we could send down the hill is limited by the size of the Gold Hill intertie.

"In the end, we're all in this together. Our declaration of a stage 1 drought today signals our intent to do our share in this dry year and ask our customers to cut back on their use of water."

The District's Drought Preparedness Plan, adopted by the Board in early 2008, describes different stages of drought. Each stage lists steps for the District and its customers to take to meet progressively higher targets for saving water.

In stage 1, customers are asked to reduce their water use—voluntarily—to help achieve a 15-percent reduction from the past three-year average use within the District's service area.

"We are fairly confident that our customers will meet the goal," said David Witter, director of EID's natural resource department. "We know that many District customers are already committed to saving water. And they have a good record. During the 1976-1977 drought, our customers reduced their water use by 46 percent. During the 1987-1988 drought, that figure was 60 percent."

"The Governor asked all urban water users to reduce their use by 20 percent," Witter said. "Through the cooperation of our customers and our water-efficiency programs like the installation of evapo-transpiration controllers and our conservation-oriented Irrigation Management Services program for agricultural landowners, we think we can achieve the Governor's target."

"The Governor's one-size-fits-all approach is unfair to agencies like ours that have worked hard to become more water efficient over the past 10 to 20 years," said Board Vice President John Fraser. "We need to make sure the Governor and appropriate state and federal agencies understand that water conservation, like this water district and our customers practice, should be recognized."

Wheeldon, Fraser, and Board members Harry Norris and Bill George approved the drought declaration. Board member George Osborne dissented after his proposal to delay the decision to the April 13 Board meeting was voted down. Osborne said he wanted to wait a few more weeks so that the most updated information on water conditions would be available.

The voluntary steps customers are being asked to take in the stage 1 drought are:

- Irrigate your landscape between the evening and early morning hours (8:00 pm – 6:00 am) to reduce evaporation losses.

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- Inspect all irrigation systems, repair leaks, and adjust spray heads to provide optimum coverage and prevent avoidable overspray.
- Change the minutes of running time for irrigation valves to keep them consistent with fluctuations in weather as determined by evapo-transpiration data.
- Reduce minutes of running time for each irrigation valve if water run-off (gutter flooding) is occurring.
- Take advantage of water conservation incentive, rebate, and give-away programs to replace high water-using plumbing fixtures and appliances with water-efficient models.
- Do not refill a swimming pool that has been drained.
- Fix leaks.
- Wash vehicles from a bucket, using a hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle for a quick rinse. Commercial car washes are exempt.

Other common-sense practices include sweeping paved areas rather than washing them, washing only when dishwashers and clothes washers are full, and turning off the water while shaving, brushing teeth, and peeling vegetables.

Customers can also take advantage of discounts and rebates for water-efficient appliances and for evapo-transpiration controllers used on landscapes. To learn more, customers can contact the District's water efficiency staff or visit the EID website.

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For more information, contact Deanne Kloepfer at 530-622-4513.

Visit EID's website at www.eid.org.