

IWVWD General Manager's Column
March 16, 2015

New Year, Same Challenges

By Don Zdeba

We are barely three months into 2015 and already there has been much happening in the realm of water, both locally and statewide. It has been a disappointing winter with respect to precipitation. California's latest snow survey revealed the Sierra Nevada snowpack is far below normal and could end up being the lowest on record in nearly 25 years. Statewide, snow supplies are about a third of the water needed for residents, agriculture and industry. A higher accumulation of winter snowpack translates to more water for California reservoirs to meet demand in the summer and fall. Another alarming report was this past January was the first time since records have been kept that San Francisco recorded no measureable precipitation. It appears to be a certainty that the current drought will be extending to a fourth year.

In response, the State Water Resources Control Board is preparing to extend mandatory conservation actions that were enacted last year and implement new ones. Among the actions being considered within the next several weeks are a prohibition on irrigation of turf or ornamental landscapes during and 48 hours following measurable precipitation; hospitality sector restrictions requiring that water only be served on request in restaurants and bars, and requiring the operators of hotels and motels to offer patrons the option of not having their towels and linens washed daily; a requirement for urban water suppliers that do not already have a limit on the number of days that outdoor irrigation of ornamental landscapes or turf with potable water is allowed, to limit such irrigation to no more than two days per week; and a requirement that urban water suppliers promptly notify their customers when they are aware of leaks within the customer's control.

The District's customers have responded in a very positive way to the call to conserve. Water produced during the first two months of 2015 declined 17.4% and 15.8% in January and February, respectively. The 15.8% decline in February was especially noteworthy since local weather data indicated the mean temperature was 3° higher than February 2014 and we recorded almost a full inch less rainfall. The calculated residential use for February was 85 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) compared to 98 gpcd in January. We will soon be entering our warmer months when water demand increases due to increased landscape watering and the use of evaporative cooling. Please continue to use water responsibly. There are many resources available with water conservation tips including our website, www.iwvwd.com. I encourage you to consider actions you can take to reduce your consumption and conserve our precious groundwater resource.

I am pleased to announce a new program that is being offered by IWVWD. We will soon be sending out mailers with information on a "Cash for Grass" pilot program. Customers will be offered \$1.00 per square foot up to 2,000 feet to remove living turf in their front yards or commercial recreation areas and replace it with efficient desert-appropriate landscape. Initially, the program will be limited and applicant names will be drawn at

random until the reserved funds have been exhausted. Depending on the popularity and available funds, the program can be extended.

Finally, at their March 9th meeting, the Board of Directors approved Ordinance 96 which implements the recommendations of the 2014 Cost of Service Study by Bartle Wells. The study recommended overall rate increases of 4.1%, 3.5%, 3.5% over the next three years to meet debt service and reserve requirements. The District's 10-Year (FY 2015 through 2024) Capital Improvement Plan includes over \$25.9 million in infrastructure needs with \$21.8 million in projects planned for the first 5 years. To keep the increases moderate, the plan includes debt funding of capital projects in the form of a \$10 million, 4%, 20-year loan issued in FY 2018. It should be noted implementation of these increases is subject to annual review by the Board. For example, upon review of projected revenues and expenses at the time, the Directors voted to not implement the rate increase scheduled for February 2014. If you are interested in more detail about the study or Ordinance 96, both documents are on the District's website.

In an effort to expand our outreach, IWVWD is now on Facebook and Twitter. We will be making use of social media to communicate important messages about water-related topics and District news. You can find links to both accounts on the home page of our website.

In closing, this will be another challenging year as we move toward establishment of the local Groundwater Sustainability Agency mandated by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act legislation signed into law by Governor Brown last September 16th. I encourage valley residents to stay informed and provide input as the process evolves.

