

CALIFORNIA'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER - EST. 1851

# Mountain Democrat



## As lakes fill EID worries over drought declaration

By Michael Raffety | Editor | March 12, 2009 13:53

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's declaration of a statewide drought emergency Feb. 27 is causing a headache for the El Dorado Irrigation District.

"How can the governor's edict have any meaning statewide when there are 500 water agencies statewide, all with different water supplies" asked EID Director John Fraser, who retired as counsel to the Association of California Water Agencies.

"We're all on meters and use half an acre-foot a year. Sacramento and Folsom are unmetered and use three-quarters an acre-foot," said Director Harry Norris.

EID Natural Resources Director Dave Witter affirmed those differences, noting that average daily use by EID residential customers is 217 gallons per day while the Sacramento regional average is 280 gallons per day. EID customers use 29 percent less than Sacramento regional customers.

The governor's declaration requests a 20 percent cutback on water use.

In the meantime Sly Park's Jenkinson Lake went from 60 percent full to 80 percent full in six days, said General Manager Tom Gallier. Folsom Lake also was at 60 percent of capacity, it was reported to the EID board March 9.

As of March 11 Folsom Lake was at 63 percent and Shasta Lake was at 54 percent.

At the March 23 meeting the board will consider whether to declare a Stage 1 drought alert.

"... with the criteria in our Drought Preparedness Plan, staff is confident that we can defend our declaration a good faith effort to comply with the governor's request," wrote Water Resources Manager Liz Mansfield in a memo to the board.

"In a Stage 1 drought the voluntary actions we ask our customers to take are intended to help us reduce consumption by 15 percent from the districtwide average of the past three years.," Mansfield wrote.

Additionally the district plans to install 1,000 evapotranspiration controllers this year to aid in more efficient water use.

Witter noted that in the 1977 drought, water rights were taken temporarily by the state.

"As we understand it he (the governor) has the police power to do that," Witter said.

"We need to know how much water we can get out of Folsom," Norris said.

“Where we’re facing danger is in the process. Water we have in Folsom could be in jeopardy,” Fraser said.

“When we lose that water it just goes down the river,” said Board Chairman George Wheeldon, who suggested in an emergency there will have to be less water released from Folsom Dam for environmental purposes.

“Our having rehabilitated Hazel Creek tunnel gets more and more important,” Wheeldon noted.

Hazel Creek Tunnel, put in at the insistence of the late Mark Nielsen when he was on the EID board, is used to transfer water from the El Dorado Canal to Jenkinson Lake in Sly Park. The district manager at the time gave away ownership of the tunnel diversion to PG&E. EID regained control of the tunnel when it bought Project 184 from PG&E. Project 184 includes four alpine reservoirs, 22.5 miles of flume and canal, Forebay Reservoir and the 22 megawatt Akin Powerhouse.

EID has owned the rights to 15,080 acre-feet of water out of Project 184 since before 1914, meaning it predates the State Water Resources Control Board and therefore is untouchable by the state. The actual project was built in 1864. The powerhouse was built in 1922. The water is delivered at Forebay reservoir in Pollock Pines.

EID also has 17,000 acre-feet of water from Project 184, but the water currently is delivered at Folsom Lake.

EID has filled out a request for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to approve a temporary “Warren Act” contract to deliver 3,000 acre-feet from that 17,000 and also 3,000 from the 15,000 acre-feet of water authorized by an act of Congress named after then Congressman Vic Fazio. Prospects are dim for the request being granted this year, though.

Warren Act contracts that are expected to be issued as a matter of routine are for 4,560 acre-feet from Folsom Reservoir that include pre-1914 ditch water rights and Weber Reservoir permitted storage rights. The ditch water is the Summerfield Ditch from Slab Creek, the Farmers Free Ditch from Weber Creek and the Gold Hill Ditch from Hangtown Creek.

Also EID gets Central Valley Project water from Folsom totaling 7,550 acre-feet, with 4,123 acre-feet delivered last year.

Warren Act contract prices for the ditch water are \$17.71 per acre-foot for a total of almost \$81,000 plus a \$500 administration fee. The district saves \$82,600 by not having to pay the federal habitat restoration fee by using this water in place of CVP water service contract water, according to a memo from Dan Corcoran, EID environmental review division manager.

An acre-foot is equal to 1 acre covered by a foot of water. There are 325,851 gallons of water in an acre-foot.

E-mail Michael Raffety at [mraffety@mtdemocrat.net](mailto:mraffety@mtdemocrat.net) or call (530) 344-5067.

The Mountain Democrat Newspaper is published Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday by Mountain Democrat Inc.

All images and text within these cyberpages are copyrighted by the Mountain Democrat © 1360 Broadway, P.O. Box 1088, Placerville, CA 95667 (530) 622-1255 Fax (530) 622-7894

Powered by [PHPography](#)