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Water supply enough for summer, EID says

Despite dry year, reservoirs will help meet demand through '07.

By Cathy Locke - Bee Staff Writer

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Though the state Department of Water Resources has declared 2007 a "critically dry" year, El Dorado Irrigation District customers can expect adequate water supplies this summer.

The district serves nearly 100,000 residents in El Dorado County.

Staff members updated district directors last week on conditions for drinking water and power generation in the coming months. They also presented the draft 2007 Water Resources and Service Reliability Report, which establishes the number of water meters available for new construction.

The Sierra snowpack is about 20 percent of normal, but water stored from last year will help the district meet demands through 2007, said Sharon Fraser, an assistant engineer with the Drinking Water Division.

"If another dry year followed this year, it could constitute a drought," she said.

Jenkinson Lake, which provides about 50 percent of the district's water, came close to spilling in May, Fraser said, and of the four lakes in the Project 184 hydroelectric system, all but Caples filled this year.

"For the next two months, there's no chance of drought," she said.

The outlook for power generation isn't quite as rosy. Melissa Gunter of the district's Hydroelectric Division, noted that the snowpack is melting quickly.

"The Sierra snowpack is really our fifth reservoir, and we don't have much in that fifth reservoir," she said.

Gunter said water conditions this year are similar to those in 2004, when the district had to curtail power generation in August.

The district also had to start releasing water earlier this year under new federal license requirements for the Project 184 system, she said,

The draft Water Resources and Service Reliability Report, however, indicates that water supplies will meet demands and support new construction in 2007.

In the El Dorado Hills area, served by water pumped from Folsom Lake, water availability is limited by the capacity of treatment and delivery facilities, primarily the El Dorado Hills Water Treatment Plant.

But deliverable water is expected to exceed demand by 746 acre-feet. An acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover an acre to a depth of one foot.

Based on a projected demand of 0.8 acre-feet per average household in the El Dorado Hills area, enough water will be available for 933 new residences.

In the rest of the district, served by eastern reservoirs, water availability is not restricted by the delivery system. There supply is expected to exceed demand by 1,407 acre-feet. With use projected at 0.58 acre-feet per household, enough water will be available for 2,426 new residences.

The report also includes supply and demand projections for recycled water, used for landscaping in much of the El Dorado Hills area.

The recycled system receives water from the El Dorado Hills and Deer Creek wastewater treatment plants and Bass Lake Reservoir. Drinking water is used to supplement the system when recycled sources fall short of demand.

For 2007, the report anticipates a recycled water supply of 4,262 acre-feet. Projected demand ranges from 3,776 acre-feet in a normal or wet year, to 4,493 acre-feet in a dry year.

Brian Mueller, co-manager of the Drinking Water Division, said the updated Water Resources and Services Reliability Report will be finalized for release to the public.

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