

Drought Impacts on California Water Agencies

Based on a survey prepared by the Association of California Water Agencies

With California officially in a drought, local water agencies are dealing with challenges ranging from low runoff to court-ordered reductions in water deliveries to soaring energy costs. An informal survey conducted by ACWA shows drought conditions are having an array of impacts on local water agencies. Of about 80 water agencies that have responded to the survey so far:

- 40% have declared a water supply or drought alert.
- 70% are calling for voluntary conservation, and 13% have mandatory rationing in place.
- 25% have imposed restrictions on outdoor watering.
- 50% of agricultural agencies say they are rationing irrigation water, and 22% say farmland is being fallowed.
- 16% say crops are being abandoned.
- 39% are drawing down their water reserves / reservoir storage to meet needs this year.
- 29% say there are pumping more groundwater to offset the loss of surface water
- 44% say they have less water available for groundwater recharge this year.
- 34% say they are planning to increase water rates due to water supply shortages.
- 17% say they have drought rates / surcharges in place
- Of those not taking action now, 83% anticipate taking action in the future.

In the comments section, respondents have reported seeing farmers turn to their own wells to pump water to crops; implementing a tiered-rate structure to discourage high use; modifying will-serve letters to developers; limiting new connections to 10 per year; and implementing drought surcharges for water use

exceeding 75%. Many anticipate taking more stringent action in 2009 if weather patterns continue.

More on the drought and ACWA's 450 public water agency members is available at www.acwa.com.

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