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4232 Las Virgenes Road
Calabasas, CA 91302
(818) 251-2100
Fax (818) 251-2109

WESTLAKE

FILTRATION PLANT
(818) 251-2370
Fax (818) 251-2379

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RECLAMATION FACILITY
(818) 251-2300
Fax (818) 251-2309

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(818) 251-2340
Fax (818) 251-2349

www.LVMWD.com

MEMBER AGENCY OF THE
METROPOLITAN WATER
DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Glen D. Peterson
MWD Representative

From Drought to Floods: Water is Life

Last week, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) rescinded its emergency conservation restrictions for 6.6 million people in its State Water Project-dependent areas due to historic rainfall and snowpack, lifting the one-day-per-week watering restriction for LVMWD customers.

Contact: Mike McNutt, Public Affairs & Communications Manager
818-251-2124 (w) 614-390-7930 (c) mmcnutt@lvmwd.com
Riki Clark, Public Affairs Associate
818-251-2129 (w) 909-646-0199 (c) rclark@lvmwd.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Calabasas, CA - At its regularly scheduled board meeting, MWD voted to rescind the historic emergency water conservation restrictions for 6.6 million people in its State Water Project-dependent areas, signaling a drastic improvement in drought and hydrologic conditions. All LVMWD customers are now able to irrigate more than once a week.

Water budgets have been normalized and no longer include drought factors. On Tuesday, the LVMWD Board of Directors also adopted changes to its Code that allow for the use of flow restriction devices in perpetuity, regardless of drought and water supply conditions. The use of flow restriction devices was temporarily suspended after the Board took action in February to de-escalate the drought emergency from Stage 3 to Stage 2.

LVMWD customers conserved water at a very high level. In the latter half of 2022, customers achieved an average of a 40% reduction in usage, which is unprecedented.

Approximately 82% of customers stayed below the excessive tier of their water allocations throughout the drought emergency; only about 18% exceeded one and a half times their water budget for four or more months during the same period of time. About 60% of customers stayed within their reduced water budgets each month. A total of 268 customers (1.3% of all accounts) had flow restriction devices installed during the drought emergency due to excessive water use.

“The momentum created by our customer base during the last three years of the drought has promoted lasting behavioral change, embracing the lifestyle of “Conservation is a California Way of Life,” stated David Pedersen, General Manager of Las Virgenes Municipal Water District. “We ask that instead of falling back into old water usage habits, our customers continue to push forward with a focus on water use efficiency, even when we are experiencing rain and snow like we have recently. The next drought could be just around the corner.”

LVMWD has installed advanced meters throughout its service area. These meters allow customers to review their water usage data in near real-time. Customers can go to www.LVMWD.com/AdvancedMeters to sign up. This free service allows individual customers to manage their water usage to help stay within their water budgets.

Prior to the drought, nearly 70% of all residential water usage was for quenching the thirst of outdoor landscapes, including lawns. Instead of reinstalling turf, customers are urged to consider transforming their landscapes using climate appropriate plants. Beautiful gardens can enhance a home’s curb appeal, while using significantly less water than traditional lawns and providing much needed habitat for pollinators.

The uncertainty of weather patterns is the new normal. Traditional rainy seasons may produce paltry sums of rain and snow, creating another possible drought pattern or producing excessive rain and snow that causes floods, mudslides and property damage. The District is considering further de-escalations of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan given all the rain and snow; however, staff is being mindful of the shortage conditions on the Colorado River and waiting for the State to discontinue its drought emergency before doing so.

Additionally, LVMWD continues to urge MWD to make timely investments in the infrastructure improvements that are necessary to eliminate the vulnerability of its State Water Project-dependent areas and provide all of its Member Agencies with equitable access to MWD's water supply and storage assets. To that end, the MWD Board adopted a resolution, consisting of a call to action and commitment to equitable reliability, in August 2022.

However, more work is needed to make good on the commitment, particularly for those agencies like LVMWD that receive water from the West Branch of the State Water Project. The District is also evaluating a new intertie with Los Angeles County Waterworks District No. 29, Malibu, to improve its access to available water supplies.

Because LVMWD's service area lacks local water supply, the District has embarked on a major potable reuse program called the Pure Water Project Las Virgenes – Triunfo that involves reusing wastewater as a new drinking water supply. This tried and true technology has been used for decades in Orange County, Singapore, and Australia to name a few. Upon completion, the project will provide more than 20% of LVMWD's water locally.

Although the District de-escalated activation of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan from Stage 3 to Stage 2, staff will be keeping close tabs on wasteful water use and continue with water patrols to address wasteful water practices. Flow restriction devices may be used for customers who use more than double their water budgets for three or more months under Stages 1 and 2 of the Water Shortage Contingency Plan, or even under normal conditions when the Plan is not activated.

Customers who routinely use excessive amounts of water will receive a flow restrictor for at least 14 days the first time, 90 days the second time, and 180 days the third and subsequent times. The LVMWD Board also approved changes to allow for recycled water and irrigation-only accounts to be shut off for excessive use, if necessary.

For more information and to stay informed on drought, conservation, and rebates, please visit www.lvmwd.com.

Be sure to follow LVMWD on Facebook, Twitter @lvmwd, and Instagram LasVirgenes_MWD to join the conversation.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District provides potable water, wastewater treatment, recycled water and biosolids composting to more than 70,000 residents in the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village, and unincorporated areas of western Los Angeles County.

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