

Collins Lake Drought Times

A publication of Browns Valley Irrigation District

July 2008

NOTICE OF WATER SHUTOFF!

Rationing Begins July 14th

BREAKING NEWS - Due to the worsening water storage conditions in Collins Lake, the **water will be shut off three days each week** beginning July 14th. From that point and for the foreseeable future, water rationing will consist of the irrigation system being completely turned off Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each week. The Board expressed thanks to the water users for their water conservation efforts so far this year, but feels that this next step is necessary to insure that there will be at least some supplies in Collins Lake at the end of the irrigation season. You are advised to prepare for this shutoff if you have any situations where no water for several days could be critical.



Governor Declares Drought

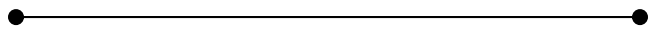
Only 4 weeks after BVID Board!

On June 4th Governor Schwarzenegger declared a Drought for the State of California. Meanwhile on April 1st the Browns Valley Irrigation District Board of Directors, at a special Board meeting, declared a Drought in the Collins Lake Service Area of the District (the Collins Lake Service Area includes all of the foothill area of BVID). The BVID Board saw that Collins Lake was only 69% full with no forecast of rain and realized that there was just not enough water to make full deliveries this irrigation season.

The Board at the April 10th Board meeting then passed an Emergency/Drought Water Conservation – Ordinance. This Ordinance calls for water users to not waste water and requires landowners to maintain their ponds to less than full levels. The Ordinance also allows for the enforcement of these rules. Chronic water wasters that ignore the warning letters will find themselves cutoff from irrigation water. The Board is working very hard to get through this Drought without having to resort to rationing.

The BVID Board is looking at the Collins Lake condition at each Board meeting and may impose rationing if water use in the service area is not kept under control.

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Restricting Flows To Conserve Water

For the second time in the 44 year history of Virginia Ranch Dam, BVID has a water shortage in the Collins Lake service area.

History -

In 1976 - 77 there were less than 300 BVID costumers most using several miner's inches. Deliveries were a constant flow measurement, 24/7 from an open ditch through a measuring box into the customers ditch. To reduce use and conserve water required temporally changing the measuring box size which was as simple as tacking a small scrap of wood into the measuring box. The reduced flow was tough on some of the farmers/ranchers who depended on their pasture land or olive crop for their living but everyone made do with the water available and we made it through the drought okay.

Present Conditions -

BVID faces a completely different situation today with the primary use of water being residential landscape such as lawns, gardens, family orchards, ponds and hobby livestock. There are still some large pasture areas and olive orchards being irrigated but they are a very small percentage of total users.

There have also been significant changes in the delivery system with most of today's customers served by pipelines with water flow governed by a restriction orifice at the delivery valve. In some, but not all, situations the service could be resized to a smaller orifice and thereby cut the amount of water available to a customer. This sounds easy enough but comes with a lot of problems, the biggest being that it would require resizing about 1,500 services. Many customers have sprinkler systems designed for the flow presently available to them. Restricting the amount of water available to the system in many situations could easily make the system useless. The size of the orifice for delivering one inch of water is determined by the pressure at the valve. The high pressure on some pipelines would require a very small orifice that could easily plug cutting off the water flow.

If users are unable to voluntarily reduce water usage enough the only option will be to shut the water off in the entire system for 2 – 3 days a week and/or shutting down the system in early fall. As of now what will be done or how is undecided. The situation is being closely monitored and will be determined by the drawdown of Collins Lake.

District Rents Pumps

Pushing Yuba River Water into Drought area

In an extraordinary effort to conserve Collins Lake water, BVID is renting 2 diesel lift pumps to pump up to 5,400 gallons per minute of Yuba River water up into the lower reaches of the Collins Lake service area (the foothill portion of the District). This effort will reduce the normal demand on Drought stricken Collins Lake and will be a very expensive project. With both pumps running 24 hours a day the pumps burn almost 300 gallons of diesel each day. The costs to the District will dramatic but just may prevent BVID from having to ration irrigation water to its users that rely on Collins Lake water. This pumping effort will not be the magic cure to this Drought. It will also require each water user to not waste water or spill water from the many ponds in the District.

Water Conservation Tips

Collins Lake is in a drought situation and water must be conserved. It is up to You, the water user, to decide how this will be accomplished. Conservation will be either by all water users voluntarily cutting back or by BVID shutting the water off 2 - 3 days a week and/or stopping all deliveries in early Fall. Keep in mind the gallon you saved in July may be the gallon available to use in September.

One of the old standbys for water conservation is water only before 6 a.m. and after 8 p.m. to reduce evaporation. While this is true it doesn't necessarily fit the BVID delivery system. The pipelines in BVID are extensions of the open ditch delivery system. The open ditches are

designed for constant flow and can waste water when trying to keep up with the fluctuating demand caused by the part time irrigation so common in landscape watering. If your system allows run one sprinkler for 2 hours instead of two sprinklers for one hour. Anything You can do to balance your water use to a more constant flow without increasing your overall use will help BVID conserve.

Tips

Ways to conserve water in your landscape

- If there is a pond on Your property that requires You to run water from the BVID delivery system to keep it full You are required to keep it below the overflow at all times. If your pond is overflowing from a neighbor's runoff talk to them about water waste or report it to BVID staff.
- Use automatic water controls when ever possible or use auto shutoff or a kitchen timer as a reminder to move or turn off water if using a hose end sprinkler.
- Modify your irrigation schedule, either automatic or by hand, to fit the changing weather conditions. Keep irrigation cycles shorter and less frequent during cloudy or cool periods. If possible reset irrigation controllers to a shorter time for conservation. Several short on off cycles can give water a chance to soak in and not run off. Water only after the top inch of soil is dry. Even during the hottest times, daily watering is rarely warranted.
- Do a quick check to assure that your sprinkler heads are spraying properly. Do you see any leaks or waterspouts? Also check that sprinklers are directed at your plants and their spray is unobstructed. Adjust sprinklers to prevent over spray, runoff or over watering. Water streaming onto the driveway or walkway is a sure sign something's amiss.
- When possible install water-efficient drip irrigation systems for trees, shrubs, and flowers Add 2" to 3" of mulch around plants to reduce evaporation.

- Consider an upgrade to a "smart irrigation controller" that automatically adjusts watering times for hotter weather, and shuts down the system when it rains.
- Repair leaks and broken sprinkler heads and leaking hose bibs. Repair any leaks around pool and spa pumps.
- Install covers on pool and spas to reduce evaporation.
- Look at what You are watering, weeds use a lot of water so controlling weeds in the landscape can look better as well as conserve water.
- Consider cutting back a little on lawn area, 10 % may not seem like much or even be noticed but the water saving can add up.
- Don't mow lawn area short, mowing your lawn at 3 – 3 ½ inches will use less water as the ground stays cooler.
- This is only a few of the many ways water can be saved. Some will make very little difference in Your overall water use but along with 40 of your neighbors cutting back a little, a lot of water can be conserved.

Drought Questions

Answers for BVID Water Users

What does this Drought mean to me?

If you are a miner's inch water user (except for those south of the intersection of Joins Road and Spring Valley Road), you are in the Collins Lake service area, which is short on supplies (see "Governor Declares Drought"). If the demand for water this year is the same as last year, there will not be enough water to go around.

Why is there a drought in BVID?

The only source of water for the Collins Lake service area is Collins Lake. This Lake is only fed by rainfall (there is no snow pack in this watershed) and this is the second year in a row that there was not enough rainfall to fill the

Lake. Last year, we were 8' short of filling and this year we were 16' short of filling. At that level, there is not enough water to meet last year's demands without running the Lake bone dry.

How come only part of the District is in a drought?

There are two (2) service areas in the District. The upper District (the foothill region) is supplied water from Collins Lake and is called the Collins Lake service area. The lower District (mostly rice ground) is served water from the Yuba River and is called the Yuba River service area. The District's Yuba River water rights are in great shape even in a critically dry year such as this year. In fact, BVID is pushing some of the Yuba River water up into the lower end of the Collins Lake service area and still has water to spare (see "District Rents Pumps").

I hear that BVID is transferring water. How can that happen during a drought?

Yes, BVID is involved in two (2) water transfer programs, but none of the transfer water will come from Collins Lake. The first transfer is from the District's conserved Yuba River water (3,100 acre-feet). BVID completed a water conservation project in the early 1990's that developed a transferable supply of Yuba River water. This water can be transferred with no impacts to District water deliveries. The second transfer is through the Yuba River Accord and is a Groundwater Substitution transfer using ag wells located in the rice grounds. This transfer will use Yuba County Water Agency water rights water and not BVID's water to complete the transfer.

Will there be enough water to last the irrigation season?

That depends on several things, but mostly on you, the water user. The point of conserving water now is to save some of the supply for use later in the year. Water that is wasted is gone from the system and cannot be recovered.

What happens if Collins Lake gets too Low?

The Board set the low point for Collins Lake at the same level as last year's low point. At that level, the Lake had only 16% of its useable capacity left in storage. If we get to that point this year (and we are headed for it), the Board may decide to end the irrigation season and could even suspend the Winter Water schedule.

One option that the Board can do to help prevent the Lake from dropping too fast is to impose water rationing where the irrigation system is turned off one or more days each week. This might help stretch the remaining supplies in Collins Lake.

Will there be Winter Water this year?

Again, that depends on how much water is in Collins Lake at the end of the irrigation season. This assumes that it will start raining before we run out of water and we have enough left over to support Winter Water. See "What happens if the Collins Lake gets too low?"

What can I do to help?

Water conservation is the key to surviving this drought. There are a number of things that you can do to help out;

- 1) Don't over irrigate. If water is running off of your property, there is more water being put on the ground than can soak in and water your plants. Those with pastures will need to put enough water out to get to the bottom of the field but will have very little water leaving their property. For landscape irrigation, there should be no water leaving your parcel.
- 2) Don't spill water from your pond. Keep the water level in your pond below the spillway and water will not drain away.

What is BVID doing to help?

The District is doing several things to help save Collins Lake water;

- 1) We have installed two (2) temporary lift pumps to reduce the demand on Collins Lake

water in the lower end of the District (see “District Rents Pumps”).

2) We have increased the hours that the ditch tenders are out in the District managing the delivery system and looking for water wasters. We have already identified several over waterer’s and are working with them to do a better job of irrigating their property.

3) We are tracking the Collins Lake levels and are posting the chart on the District website (www.bvid.org). This chart shows the current lake level along with a projection line that is the goal to get us through the water season.

What Happens When Water Wasters are Identified?

Once a Water Waster is identified, there are several levels of encouragement/enforcement used to convince the user to conserve water. First, the water waster is sent a letter informing them that they are wasting water and that they need to start conserving. If the first letter is unsuccessful, a second letter is sent to warn them that if they do not start correcting the problem, that their water will be shut off for 30 days. If they still are wasting water, they will be shut off for 30 days. If after the 30 day shutoff they are still wasting water, they will be shut off for the remainder of the irrigation season. So far, no users have been shut off, however, once a water user is shut off, any appeals will have to be taken to the full Board of Directors.

Report Water Waste

If you see water flowing where it should not be, either along the road, in a ravine or even onto your property, please give BVID a call at (530) 743-5703. We will investigate the source of the wasted water and take the appropriate action. Your name will not be used during the investigation but the water that you help save could help the District in its efforts to have enough water to make deliveries during the irrigation season. Thank you for watching out for wasted water.