

Manager's Column

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DROUGHT: "GOT WATER"

The mission of the Nipomo Community Services District is to provide its customers with reliable, quality, and cost-effective services now and in the future.

Encarta Dictionary defines *drought* as, "a long period of extremely dry weather when there is not enough rain for the successful growing of crops or the replenishment of water supplies". I think most folks agree last year was a 'droughty' year with some of the lowest rainfall on record being recorded throughout the region. The lack of rainfall so far this year is adding to concerns over local groundwater supply.

In order to measure the general health of groundwater underlying the Nipomo Mesa, the court-ordered "Nipomo Mesa Management Area Technical Group" (NMMA) established an index of eight 'key' groundwater wells across the Mesa. Last spring (April 2013), this index of wells dropped by 30% from the previous spring measurement and reached its lowest level recorded in the near 40-year record.

There is no absolute way to know if drought conditions will continue the remainder of this winter or in coming years. We can only look to local weather history and make predictions about future conditions. If we knew the next twenty years would be either extremely wet or extremely dry, our water resources plan would be significantly different one way from the other. It is most prudent that we plan for dry conditions going forward.

A pipeline to bring the area supplemental water is under construction, yet water deliveries from the first phase of the pipeline are not expected until mid-2015. In the meantime, all Mesa water users need to be water conscientious. This winter, members of the NMMA group are planning drought management measures that may be needed should we remain in drought conditions and our local water levels continue to decline.

Drought management measures generally focus penalties on the high end of water use in an attempt to minimize irrigation use. More than ever, now is the time to consider reducing the water demands of your landscape. Many home owners could reduce summer time irrigation by more than 50% by simply being more efficient when watering their existing landscape. There is a great deal of information on the District's website and other local and online sources regarding water use efficiency and converting to low water use landscapes. If you need some help getting started, call the District, our staff will help point you in a water conserving direction.

Until next time...

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