



# SBCWD AG UPDATE

SAN BENITO COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

Volume 3, Issue 1

Fall 2008

## State economic losses estimated at \$350 million

Source: Agricultural Water Management Council August 2008



Arnold at San Luis Reservoir  
(Photo courtesy Office of the Governor)

Water shortages are hard for everyone, and no one knows this better than farmers who are experiencing mandatory water restrictions. Regulatory impacts and poor hydrology come on the heels of a previous dry year. With little or no rainfall since February, Governor Schwarzenegger recently declared a drought for the State and instituted an

initiative to reduce water consumption 20 percent per person by the year 2020. But what about agriculture? People are asking what farmers are doing to be part of the solution to help everyone get by in this time of need. Yet farmers have already been especially hard hit by water supply shortages.

In times of drought, farmers are the first to have their water supplies cut. To make it through this year's water crises, farmers opted to fallow land, under-irrigate crops, and even in some cases abandon land that was already planted. The

State Water Project Contractors estimate total losses from pumping restrictions to have cost California's economy \$350 million, including decreased farm production as well as job losses in agriculture and landscaping. The final impacts of this year will not be known until the growing season is over.

In July, the final Department of Water Resources (DWR) snow survey of 2008 showed snowpack water content at only 67 percent of normal and the runoff forecast at only 55 percent of normal and conditions continue to worsen across California.

### The Numbers

#### Water Rationing

Turlock Irrigation District – 37 percent cut in agricultural water allocations

Merced Irrigation District growers receive 2.5 acre-feet of water per acre (industry standard water requirements for almonds is 3 acre-feet per acre).

All of Central Valley Project

contractors (including those north of the Delta) are receiving a 40 percent allocation.

Westlands Water District growers are receiving 0.47 acre-feet of water per acre.

Bella Vista Water District adopted drought surcharge for water usage exceeding 75%

of water used during the past water year.

#### Land Fallowing

Fresno County : 46,347 acres  
Kern County : 30,895 acres  
Merced County: 2,947 acres

#### Acres Damaged

Fresno County : 170,200 acres  
Kern County : 1,821,000 acres  
Merced County: 10,695 acres

\*Source: Agricultural Water Management Council

### How much water does it take?

TO PROCESS A QUARTER POUND OF HAMBURGER:

**ONE GALLON**

TO PROCESS ONE TON OF STEEL:

**62,200 GALLONS**

TO PRODUCE ONE ORANGE:

**13.8 GALLONS**

TO PRODUCE ONE TOMATO:

**3 GALLONS**

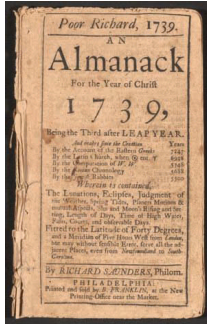
TO PRODUCE ONE EGG:

**120 GALLONS**

\*SOURCE-WWW.EPA.GOV

### Inside this issue:

OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC	2
DROUGHT FACT SHEET	2
SAN BENITO COUNTY FAIR	3
IRRIGATION & NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	3
NEW DISTRICT WEBSITE	3
CIMIS	4



## The Old Farmer's Almanac Long-range Weather Forecast

### Pacific Southwest- Annual Weather Summary November 2008 to October 2009

Winter temperatures will be about one degree below normal, on average, with the coldest periods in mid-December, early and mid-January, and early February. Rainfall and mountain snowfall will be below normal, with the stormiest periods in mid-November, mid-January, late February, and mid-March.

Relatively cool and dry weather will continue in April and May.

Summer temperatures will be slightly cooler than normal, on average. Although rainfall will be slightly above normal, a lack of mountain snow cover will create water management issues. The hottest temperatures will be in July.

Temperatures in September and October will be above normal, on average, with hottest temperatures in mid-September and early to mid-October. Rainfall will be above normal in the north and below normal in the south.

**“LOCAL DROUGHT EMERGENCY IN NINE CENTRAL VALLEY COUNTIES DUE TO WATER SHORTAGES”**

### Drought Fact Sheet

Source: Association of California Water Agencies

Back-to-back dry years and low reservoir levels have put California squarely in a statewide drought. State water officials say key reservoirs such as Lake Oroville will dip to record low levels later this fall. Mandatory rationing is in place in certain urban areas, and growers in some of California's most productive agricultural regions are seeing dramatic cuts in water deliveries.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared an official drought June 4. He also declared a local drought emergency in nine Central Valley counties due to water shortages.

#### Runoff Projections

After a bountiful January and February, precipitation came to a virtual stop in March through June, qualifying the four-month period as the

driest on record. 2008 saw the sixth driest April-May-June in 114 years of record keeping. Rainfall for the year is about at 75% of average.

The Department of Water Resources says runoff will be low enough to designate 2008 as critically dry on both the Sacramento and San Joaquin river systems.

#### Reservoir Storage

Storage in key statewide reservoirs continued to drop in June. Lake Oroville, one of the state's largest reservoirs and the mainstay of the State Water Project, is at 49% of average for this time of year. The lake is expected to drop to record low levels by this fall. San Luis Reservoir, located south of the Delta, is at 40% of average. Some agricultural districts are under mandatory rationing to avoid drawing down San Luis at a rate that would put the earthen reservoir at risk

of slumping. Urban water agencies are asking customers to conserve as well.

Total reservoir storage in the Colorado River system remains at roughly half of capacity, reflecting the preceding eight-year drought period.

#### Court Rulings & Wildfires

In December, a U.S. District Court judge ordered restrictions on water project operations in the Delta to help protect a threatened fish species, the Delta smelt. The restrictions are reducing water deliveries by as much as 30% this year to 25 million Californians. Millions of acres of farmland are also impacted. Another decision by the same judge involving salmon may also affect water project operations in the near future. A recent action regarding long-fin smelt may further tighten the screws.

## San Benito County Fair: October 3-5, 2008

San Benito County is home to a genuine old-fashioned county fair. This year's Fair dates are October 3rd -5th. Don't forget to clear your calendar so you can **"Celebrate 85 years of Family, Friends and Fun** at the San Benito County Fair! "

The fairgrounds are located at Bolado Park, 7 miles south of Hollister on Highway 25.

The San Benito County Water District will be hosting a booth in Pavilion Hall at the fairgrounds. Information on District projects and activities will be on hand. The booth will be shared with the Water Resources Association of San Benito County (WRASBC). The WRASBC will have information available on their water conservation programs that include:

- Free Toilets
- High-efficiency Washing Machine Rebates
- Water Softener Rebates
- Free Home Check-ups

There will also be literature on residential irrigation methods, drought tolerant and native plants.

Come by and see us. You may win a cool prize!



## Central Coast Irrigation and Nutrient Management Program

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) is developing a program to reduce surface irrigation water and fertilizer losses. You are invited to provide feedback for the proposed program to assist growers to increase irrigation and nutrient management efficiencies

The program will provide one-on-one technical assistance to growers farming in: Lower Salinas, Pajaro and Santa Maria watersheds, starting in January 2009.

For questions about the program or the meetings, contact Monica Barricarte, CCRWQCB: (805) 549-3881

**"THE CENTRAL  
COAST  
REGIONAL  
WATER QUALITY  
CONTROL  
BOARD WANTS  
TO HEAR YOUR  
OPINION"**

## District Website Gets a Makeover

The new District web site has been up since July 1, and has links to "Contact Us" regarding questions about the District and "Water Orders" for on-line water orders. You can also e-mail water orders at [waterorders@sbcwd.com](mailto:waterorders@sbcwd.com). Check out the information about "Who We Are" and the "District Profile." We have Board of

Director profiles and online Agendas/Minutes/Ordinances and Resolutions. We have a new Customer Service section for explanation of rates and charges, frequently asked questions and an online Farmers Handbook. Finally we have a host of web links to other water agencies and the CIMIS (California

Irrigation Management and Information Service) data exchange web page for irrigation management. This is a very useful tool these days with short water supplies and a need to use water wisely for irrigation. We hope to include a bulletin board for events and notices soon.

**We're on the  
Web!  
[www.sbcwd.com](http://www.sbcwd.com)**



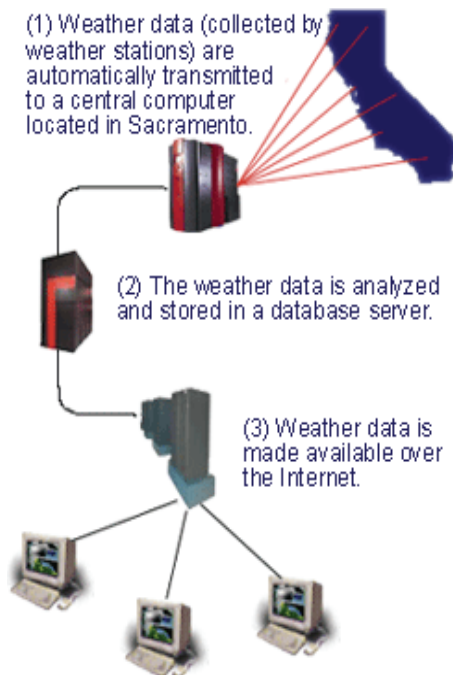
## SAN BENITO COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

30 Mansfield Road  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-637-8218 Main  
831-637-7267 Fax  
[www.sbcwd.com](http://www.sbcwd.com)

The San Benito County Water District manages the groundwater in the San Benito County portion of the Hollister-Gilroy basin, operates the San Benito River System and the San Felipe Distribution System, delivers imported CVP water to irrigation and M&I customers, and manages recharge through local streams. The District is governed by an elected five member Board of Directors, and administered by the District Manager/Engineer.

### CIMIS

## California Irrigation Management Information System



The California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) is a program of the Office of Water Use Efficiency (OWUE), California Department of Water Resources (DWR) that manages a network of over 120 automated weather stations in the state of California. CIMIS was developed in 1982 by DWR and the University of California, Davis to assist irrigators in managing their water resources efficiently. Efficient use of water resources benefits Californians by saving water, energy, and money.

CIMIS weather stations collect weather data on a minute-by-minute basis, calculate hourly and daily values and store them in the dataloggers. A computer at the DWR headquarters in Sacramento calls every station starting at midnight Pacific Standard Time (PST) and retrieves each day's data.

Once the data is transmitted, the central computer analyzes it for quality, calculates [reference evapotranspiration](#) (ET<sub>o</sub> - for grass reference and ET<sub>r</sub> - for alfalfa) and other intermediate parameters, flags the data (if necessary), and stores them in the CIMIS database. Evapotranspiration (ET) is a loss of water to the atmosphere by the combined processes of evaporation from soil and plant surfaces and transpiration from plants. Reference evapotranspiration is the loss of water from standardized grass or alfalfa surfaces over which the stations are sitting. Irrigators have to use crop factors, known as crop coefficients, to convert ET<sub>o</sub>/ET<sub>r</sub> into an actual evapotranspiration (ET<sub>c</sub>) by a specific plant.

The CIMIS weather stations are randomly distributed throughout the State of California. It is very important that the selected station represents the same microclimate as the area of interest. Some resources available to assist you in this regard include the CIMIS web site, local water districts, farm advisors, consultants, and CIMIS staff.

Local CIMIS weather stations include one at the San Benito County Water District (#126) and one at San Juan Oaks Gold Club (#143).

To learn more go to: <http://www.cimis.water.ca.gov> or you can reach the CIMIS website through a link on the Districts website: [www.sbcwd.com](http://www.sbcwd.com)