



Water Conservation and Standby Rationing Plan Developed

An innovative water conservation plan was developed in 1998 that addresses three types of water supply shortages that threaten residents within the District. The Expanded Water Conservation and Standby Rationing Plan is outlined in District Ordinance No. 92. It was developed over a period of several months by District staff in close collaboration with Cal-Am and extensive public participation.

This comprehensive plan is designed to: (1) keep Cal-Am water production within limits set by State Order 95-10; (2) establish mandatory water reductions for all water users when a physical water shortage such as a drought occurs; and (3) mandate procedures to be followed in the event of a water supply emergency caused by a natural disaster or breakdown in the water distribution system. Under this plan, every water user in the Cal-Am system must complete a survey form. Results of the survey will enable Cal-Am to establish base water use levels, and corresponding water rates for each water user.

When an actual physical water shortage occurs, private well owners and customers served by water distribution systems outside of the Cal-Am service area must also complete survey forms and adhere to mandatory water use reductions.

The District's expanded water conservation and standby rationing plan was developed in response to several factors. In 1997 Cal-Am was fined \$168,000 by the SWRCB for exceeding water production limits set by State Order 95-10. In an effort to avert future fines, Cal-Am asked the District Board to establish a water permit moratorium. In February 1998, the Board determined that a water permit moratorium would not save enough water to avoid future fines. The Board refused to establish a moratorium, but instead directed District staff to prepare a draft standby rationing plan that could be put in place if Cal-Am's water production in any year threatened to exceed the SWRCB limit.

In January 1998, Cal-Am announced that it would apply to the PUC for permission to implement a mandatory rationing plan and water permit moratorium within the District. The District conducted several public workshops and committee meetings so that Cal-Am could present its plan to the public and receive comments from the rate payers. In May 1998, Cal-Am submitted its plan to the PUC.

In April, the District Board voted to oppose Cal-Am's request to the PUC to implement mandatory rationing and a water permit moratorium in 1998. The Board reasoned that it would be premature to implement severe conservation measures on the community at that time because Cal-Am production was well below State Order 95-10 limits and water storage conditions were good.

Matt Lyons takes a break from working on the District's riverbank restoration projects and tends to the MPWMD drought tolerant plant display garden. Landscape water audits are offered to property owners as part of the water conservation and standby rationing plan adopted by the Board in 1998. The plan is based on a per-capita water use formula and contains seven stages to address increasingly severe water supply shortages. Stages 1 thru 3 are intended to keep water use within limits set by State Order 95-10.