

## *Current Water Situation in California*

As we face a second consecutive year with low rainfall, the dreaded “D” word, drought, has surfaced in Placer County and its environs. As this column is written, Folsom Lake is hovering at 18 percent of capacity. While that condition provides unique opportunities to see the remains of Gold Rush-era buildings and artifacts that are exposed when the lake level drops, the low level portends almost disaster-like conditions for the remainder of the year.

Water purveyors in the region have already begun implementing water use restrictions and with a dry forecast predicted for the coming weeks, those restrictions are likely to get more severe.

So what can we do? I would encourage all residents and visitors to get into a water-conservation frame of mind. Outdoor irrigation is usually one of the first things to go. If you have not dialed back your sprinklers and irrigation systems, you need to do that post haste. Washing driveways and motor vehicles by using a running hose should be a thing of the past.

While a long, hot shower can be a wonderful and relaxing indulgence, in these dry times, it’s also wasteful. Leaving the tap running while you are shaving or brushing your teeth is more of the same waste. Don’t let water run down the drain while you wait for hot water to reach the tap. Instead, capture that water and use it if you need to boil water or water plants.

Consider upgrades to your house’s water system. Insulate hot water pipes so the heat doesn’t dissipate as fast. Consider installing an instant hot water system or a pump on your water heater that all but eliminates the habit of waiting for the water to get hot before bathing.

There are many local businesses that can assist you with upgrading your residence or business with these features. Not only will you be doing your part to conserve water, a precious resource, but you can reduce your utility costs.

There are a couple of peripheral issues that are very germane to the subject of drought in California and now, while water is on our minds, I think it apropos to discuss them.

While California’s population continues to grow, the amount of water available for all the competing needs remains finite. Domestic use, agricultural needs and environmental demands are all competing for a limited amount of water. In wet years when the ground is saturated, the reservoirs full and everyone gets what they want or expects, life is good.

However, since much of California is essentially an irrigated desert and history tells us that we are regularly subjected to prolonged dry periods, storage capacity needs to be increased throughout the state.

That means building more reservoirs and keeping them full.

If that’s not a popular option that can gain traction in this environmentally-conscious state, then we seriously need to face the prospect of dry swimming pools, dirty automobiles, using native flora for landscaping and accepting dry conditions.

I believe this is also a good opportunity to revisit the proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan, a multi-billion dollar, Southern California-sponsored idea to divert Northern California water around the Delta and ship it down south.

While this plan is being touted as the salvation for the much damaged Delta and a way to ensure regular water deliveries to the south, it will do so at the expense of our water supplies. The guarantees for water are not for Northern California. I would encourage everyone to take a visit to Folsom Lake and look at the extremely low water levels. And while I understand that those levels are the result of a couple of very dry years, the prospect of regularly seeing such low storage levels would be very real should this boondoggle plan be approved.

I would urge everyone to offer your thoughts on the Bay Delta Plan to the state Department of Water Resources while the public comment period is open.

I would also urge you to take heed of the drought conditions we are facing and do your part to conserve water and hope for a “miracle March” of rainfall to lessen the effects of the past two years.

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to serve you. I always welcome your feedback and can be reached by e-mail at [jduran@placer.ca.gov](mailto:jduran@placer.ca.gov) or by phone at 916-787-8950.