



ALAMEDA COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Zone 7 Responds to Delta Pumping Shutdown *Groundwater and Local Storage Supplies Will Provide Backup*

The Livermore-Amador Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency has ramped up operation of its groundwater wells, and drawing from water stored in Lake Del Valle, in light of Thursday's action by the California Department of Water Resources to temporarily shut down State Water Project facilities that pump water from the Delta.

In a voluntary, preventive move, the state shut down the Delta pumps in order to protect an endangered fish species, Delta smelt, that is currently clustered in the immediate vicinity of the pumping plants. DWR plans to curtail pumping for all regions of the state until the fish physically move away from the pumps.

Delta smelt have sharply declined in numbers. Potential causes currently being explored by scientists include invasive species, toxics, power plant operations, local diversions by farmers and Delta pumping operations. However, there remain many uncertainties about the key causes. Scientists are analyzing these potential causes and developing recommendations for both short-term and long-term solutions as part of the Bay-Delta Conservation planning effort.

Aged and deteriorating levees, climate change and a struggling ecosystem plague the Delta more so today than ever before. These unprecedented challenges need to be addressed responsibly and in a timely manner in order to avoid immeasurable damages to California's water supply, environment, public health, statewide economy and infrastructure system.

Zone 7 wholesales water to nearly 200,000 people in Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin and Dougherty Valley, and supplies untreated water to 74 agricultural users for irrigation of 3,500 acres, primarily vineyards. The agency normally gets 80 percent of its water supplies conveyed through the Delta. Collectively, the State Water Project delivers water to more than 25 million residents in the state, including nearly 2 and a half million in the East Bay and South Bay served by the South Bay Aqueduct.

In response to the pump shutdown, Zone 7 has been ramping up its groundwater well operations while reducing production at its surface-water treatment plants. If the shutdown lasts for seven to 10 days, as currently estimated by the DWR, Zone 7 believes it will be able to operate without cutbacks. But because of the potential for the outage to be extended, the agency is doing contingency planning and evaluating conservation measures that might be called for. During that time, Zone 7 would be relying heavily upon stored water in Lake Del Valle and in the local groundwater basin. The agency could, depending on the various factors, come back with specific requests for conservation measures on the part of the public.

“At this time, we are asking people to use water wisely,” said Jill Duerig, general manager of Zone 7. “It only makes sense. It’s a dry year anyway and with the uncertainties, it’s only prudent to ask people to conserve.”

Zone 7 is fortunate to have storage in a local groundwater basin and in Lake Del Valle that augments imported water supplies and that serves as a kind of bank account or reserve for use during droughts and other emergencies.

By being forced to rely more heavily on groundwater during the Delta pump outage, “The water we deliver to our retailers will be harder than usual,” said Duerig, referring to the higher mineral content of groundwater. “This also forces us to use our reserves when we hadn’t expected so if we are going into a drought, we will have already expended

some of our supplies.”

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The Zone 7 Water Agency is one of the 10 active zones of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The District was established by the State Legislature in October 1949 to solve problems of flooding, drainage, channel erosion and water supply and conservation in Alameda County. In 1957, by popular vote, Zone 7 became a special district governed by a seven-member board of directors. Along with flood protection, Zone 7 supplies water to all of eastern Alameda County and a population of more than 190,000. Treated water is sold wholesale to local retailers, including the cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Dublin San Ramon Services District, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 also distributes untreated water to local agriculture operations and golf courses.