

IWVWD General Manager's Column  
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## **“State Extends Water Conservation Regulations”**

**By Don Zdeba**

Despite welcome relief from recent storms, the state still has a long way to recover from the drought conditions of the past four years. Although storms have blanketed the Central and Northern Sierra with more snow than they have seen in five years, Southern California has received about half of the average precipitation it normally receives by this date. As a result, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) adopted emergency regulations extending urban water conservation measures through October 2016. The extension provides urban water suppliers with the opportunity to adjust their conservation standard up to a maximum of eight percentage points by claiming one or more of three allowable adjustments; climate, population growth, and development of a new, local drought-resilient supply. Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD) qualifies for the maximum allowable 4% adjustment based on our local evapotranspiration rate being greater than 20% of the statewide average. As a result, our assigned conservation standard will be reduced from 36% to 32%. The 32% standard will take effect March 1st. Although seemingly providing some relief, the fact is 32% will still pose a challenge as we are at a cumulative 23.6% since June.

Recognizing the challenge to achieve a 36% reduction in consumption compared to 2013, the IWVWD Board of Directors adopted Ordinance 100 at their January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Ordinance 100 continued all of the mandatory restrictions that had been contained in Ordinance 97, adopted April 13, 2015, but added a restriction limiting outdoor landscape watering to one day per week during the months of November through February. Addresses ending in an even number may water landscape on Saturday and addresses ending in an odd number may water on Sunday. During the months of April through October, the watering schedule resorts to three days per week. Even addresses may water on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Odd addresses may water on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. March is historically a transitional month for our climate. Recognizing that fact, landscape watering can occur from one to three days per week according to the same schedule. Since we are challenged to achieve the assigned 32% conservation target, it is important that we all ensure our watering schedule during March is appropriate for the weather. Should we have a cool, wet month, watering more than one day per week will not be necessary.

We have seen increased interest this past year among home owners and businesses in converting their landscapes to a more desert appropriate theme. Last summer, IWVWD initiated a Cash for Grass rebate program with \$60,000 in seed money to assist those interested in removing their living turf and replacing it with artificial turf, native plants, rock, gravel, and yard art. The program reimburses property owners at a rate of \$1.00 per square foot of turf removed up to 2,000 square feet. As of the end of January, 26 yards have been converted with 25 more pending. When all of these are converted, 55,623 square feet of turf will have been removed saving approximately 9.5 acre-feet (almost 3.1

million gallons) of water per year. We are very pleased to announce IWWVD has been awarded \$322,000 in Prop. 84 funding through a grant application totaling just over \$1.8 million submitted by the Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Program. These funds will allow IWWVD to significantly expand the program and hopefully provide incentive to larger commercial and institutional customers to consider turf replacement. If you have interest, please contact our office at (760)375-5086.

While replacing or removing decorative turf is certainly something to consider, I cannot stress enough the need to ensure our trees receive adequate watering. The drought has taken a terrible toll on trees statewide. A recent study by Carnegie Institution for Science at Stanford using airborne, laser-guided imaging instruments and combining their measurements with satellite data going back to 2011 estimated 58 million Californian trees – pines, firs, hemlocks, juniper, sequoia and so on – are now suffering losses “extremely threatening” to long-term health. You can find information on properly maintaining trees along with other conservation tips and information on our website, [www.iwwvd.com](http://www.iwwvd.com).

For timely information related to state and local water issues I encourage you to “Like” and regularly visit the District’s Facebook page (IWV Water District) or follow us on Twitter (@IWVWaterDist). Finally, the Board of Directors and staff of IWWVD thank you for using water responsibly.