

IWVWD General Manager's Column  
June 7, 2018

## **“The Times They Are a-Changin’”** **By Don Zdeba**

When it comes to the topic of water in California, the title of the Bob Dylan song, “The Times They Are a-Changin’” certainly seems appropriate. Since the historic drought that California experienced from 2012 to 2016, there has been unprecedented legislation proposed and passed to address what many see as the inevitable effects of the confluence of climate change, a growing population, and a complicated and outdated system of storing and providing water to residents across a large, geographically diverse state.

Consider this fact: Approximately 75% of California's water supply comes from north of Sacramento while 80% of the water demand occurs in the southern two-thirds of the state. Moving water from the north part of the state to the south part where the largest demand exists required California to build many of the world's most ambitious dam projects during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The ten largest reservoirs in the state were built between 1927 and 1979. Also consider the population in California in 1979 was 23.3 million whereas in 2017 it was 39.5 million. The same reservoir system that existed in 1979 is today serving a population almost 70% higher. There has not been a large state or federally funded reservoir built in 40 years.

Briefly stated, the reasons for this include nearly all of the best sites are already taken, environmental laws that have made it more difficult to build large projects (the Endangered Species Act passed in 1973, for example), money to build large projects dried up, and cities and farms developed new ways to manage water - from groundwater storage and recycling wastewater to more efficient irrigation systems and toilets.

Recognizing concern for ongoing climate change and the cyclical nature of California's annual precipitation, Governor Brown and the State Legislature have taken action. In September 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) passed the California state legislature and was signed into California state law by Governor Brown. SGMA is intended to ensure better local and regional management of groundwater use and it seeks to have a sustainable groundwater management in California by 2042. The Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) was formed through a Joint Powers Agreement in July 2016 and has been recognized by the State as the agency responsible for local compliance with SGMA. The IWVGA is tasked with having a plan in place by January 31, 2020 to bring the basin into a condition of sustainability within twenty years.

In April 2015, Governor Brown ordered mandatory water use reductions for the first time in California's history. In Executive Order B-29-2015, the governor directed the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to impose a 25% reduction on the state's 400 local water supply agencies over the coming year. As a result, Indian Wells Valley Water District was assigned a conservation target of 36%, later reduced to 32%. (Spoiler

Alert: We did not make it.) That was followed by Executive Order B-37-16, “Making Conservation a California Way of Life.” It established actions to use water more wisely, eliminate water waste, strengthen local drought resilience, and improve agricultural water use efficiency and drought planning.

More recently, on May 31<sup>st</sup> Governor Brown signed a pair of bills creating the framework for statewide water savings mandates that will take effect in 2022. Residents will be asked to cut back on indoor and outdoor water use while water suppliers will have to submit water budgets and increase water recycling projects. The legislation establishes a per person goal of 55 gallons per day until 2025 and eventually 50 gallons per day by 2030. The SWRCB is tasked with evaluating landscaping and climate data to set local outdoor use goals by 2021. Currently, IWWWD customers average about 210 gallons per person per day indoor and outdoor use. After 2027, water districts that fail to meet their water budgets can be fined \$1,000 per day during non-drought years and \$10,000 per day during drought years.

Lastly, for now, the California legislature is still considering a proposal to impose a tax on water through a budget trailer bill based on Senate Bill 623. The monies would be collected through local water agencies and funneled to Sacramento to ensure all Californians have access to safe drinking water. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, a Senate Budget Committee failed to approve the budget trailer bill and instead approved a one-time funding with general fund dollars. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, an Assembly Budget Committee did approve the budget trailer bill so now it goes to Conference Committee to resolve the differences. Final action may be delayed until August 31<sup>st</sup>. IWWWD has joined a coalition of over 150 water agency members of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) in opposition to establishing a tax. ACWA has proposed alternative methods to accomplish the goal.

Water legislation is ever evolving and we certainly seem to be in for a wild ride so stay tuned. A good local source for information on water issues is the District’s Facebook page (IWW Water District). Information about the IWVGA is available on the group’s website, [www.iwvga.org](http://www.iwvga.org). You can find hints on conservation and other helpful information on our website, [www.iwvwd.com](http://www.iwvwd.com).

In closing, the Board of Directors and staff of IWWWD sincerely appreciate the efforts of our customers to conserve water. To date, we have exceeded the 20% reduction in consumption goal (compared to 2013) the Board adopted in June 2016. Keep up the good work!