



NEWS

EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT

Serving People and the Environment
375 ELEVENTH STREET OAKLAND, CA 94607-4240
(510) 287-0138 FAX (510) 287-0149

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2008

Contact: Charles C. Hardy
(510) 287-0141

EBMUD Water Supply Dwindling During Record Dry Period

The District faces the possibility of having to institute mandatory rationing in early May to manage supply during second consecutive dry year

OAKLAND --- The record dry spell that has left the East Bay Municipal Utility District high and dry since February may require mandatory water rationing to safeguard the District's shrinking supply.

Under EBMUD's comprehensive water shortage response plan, if spring runoff projections fall short of 450,000 acre feet of water in storage at the end of the water year this fall, the Board of Directors could move to mandatory rationing and drought restrictions to prevent the supply from shrinking faster. Current data and a 15-day dry forecast indicate the District could fall below that projection by May 1st.

To illustrate the problem, current data shows the Sierra snowpack that makes up the bulk of the District's water supply is only yielding about half of what it is normally expected in runoff.

Usually, this is the time of year snow high in the Sierra Mountains melts and meanders down into the District's Pardee Reservoir -- where 90 percent of the EBMUD's drinking water comes from, 90-plus miles away. But instead of the water supply in Pardee -- and Camanche, the flood control reservoir below it -- increasing, they are actually both decreasing with the small amount of runoff.

Dry (2)

The severity of the water shortage in the Mokelumne watershed also affects others in addition to EBMUD's 1.3 million water customers. It means that other water rights holders will have their allotments reduced or completely eliminated, and water released into the river for fish and habitat will be reduced.

As part of a comprehensive water shortage response plan, EBMUD must consider rationing and water-use restrictions such as the elimination of discretionary outdoor use like operating water fountains and washing cars. The Board could also increase the cost of water and place limits on the number of days outdoor watering can occur and the amount of water customers can use overall.

If EBMUD's Board of Directors, who were presented these findings on Tuesday, decide to implement mandatory rationing at its next regular meeting on May 13, they will determine what restrictions to set forth and when to implement those changes.

The severity of the water shortage may be surprising to some because January and February were wet months and the water supply forecasts then were very optimistic. However, since then, there has been virtually no rain or snow of significance with March being the second driest March in the District's 85-year history and April is the driest April ever to date.

Further complicating this scenario is the fact that last spring was also dry and the District came into that water year with a 15 percent water supply shortage. The two dry years combined pose the greatest threat to the District's water supply since the end of the last drought in 1991.

"January's ample snowpack is quickly disappearing due to record dry weather and if it continues it will leave our reservoirs at critically low levels," said Dennis Diemer, EBMUD General Manager, "and this could trigger a need for water restrictions."

###