



Advisory

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DWR Observes May as Water Awareness Month In a Year of Water Challenges

Sacramento – In a year of water challenges and opportunities, California’s Department of Water Resources (DWR) observes May as Water Awareness Month, promoting the theme: “Use Water Wisely.”

Though California’s winter snow pack in 2008 was near average after a dry 2007, State Water Project deliveries are severely restricted this spring. This is largely due to compliance with a Federal court’s restrictions on Delta pumping to help safeguard the threatened Delta smelt.

“Our water challenges are clear,” said DWR Director Lester Snow. “We must move forward on Governor Schwarzenegger’s comprehensive plan to invest in our water systems, restore the Delta and ensure clean, safe and reliable water supplies.”

Delta pumping export cuts are mandated by Federal Judge Oliver Wanger’s December, 2007 decision. It curtails pumping by State and Federal water projects to protect Delta smelt, whose population has plunged in recent years. In addition to water diversions, the fish are affected by such factors as invasive species and water pollution.

The State Water Project (SWP) is projected to deliver just 35 percent of requested water amounts this year for use by cities, farms and businesses in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

“In addition to pumping cuts and Delta problems, California faces many water challenges, including changing climate patterns that affect snowfall and precipitation,” said Snow. “Water is a vital necessity for our environment, people and quality of life. So wise water use and robust conservation efforts are more important now than ever before.”

Water Awareness Month originated in response to California’s most recent multi-year statewide drought in 1987-1992.

DWR is a leading State water resources management and planning agency. It operates the State Water Project, providing water to more than 24 million people and about 750,000 acres of farmland. About 70 percent of SWP water goes to cities, with about 30 percent devoted to agriculture. The Department also operates flood management and dam safety programs, performs water planning and works on Delta ecosystem and water issues.

Below is a list of special events of significance during Water Awareness Month:

ACWA's Kennedy Memorial Ceremony

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) will devote a special program at its Spring Conference in Monterey on May 8 to memorializing the life and career of David N. Kennedy. A distinguished water statesman who was DWR director for 15 years, Kennedy led DWR from 1983 to 1998. During the 1970s and 1980s, he was an assistant general manager at the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

As DWR Director, Kennedy served under Governors George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson, leading the agency during major floods in 1986 and 1997, and the drought of 1987-1992. His DWR service achievements included construction of the Coastal Aqueduct and addition of four pumps to the Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant in the south Delta. Kennedy was awarded a distinguished alumni award by UC Berkeley. In retirement, he was a consultant on an expert panel reviewing New Orleans flooding from Hurricane Katrina. Kennedy died in December, 2007 at age 71.

DWR Regional Events

DWR is marking Water Awareness Month by taking part in regional events in Northern and Central California, including Oroville in Butte County and O'Neill Forebay near San Luis Reservoir, west of Los Banos, and participating at several Southern California regional events.

O'Neill Forebay

The traditional Kids Fishing and Fun Day at O'Neill Forebay near San Luis Reservoir will be held on Saturday, May 17, from 8 a.m. to noon. This is an event designed for young anglers, 15 and under. Attendees enter at the San Luis Creek Recreational turnoff, on State Highway 152, seven miles west of Interstate 5. For information, call the Romero Visitors Center at San Luis Reservoir at (209) 827-5353.

Oroville Celebration

On Saturday, May 10, DWR employees will take part in a Jack Splash Children's event as part of Oroville's Feather Fiesta Day celebration, a nine-day event scheduled this year from May 3 through May 11. A fishing simulator will be the key attraction. The event is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Parking Lot A, located at Montgomery, Meyers and Huntoon streets, with the Oroville Municipal Auditorium as the back drop.

For information on the DWR Booth, contact Rosemary Martin at the Lake Oroville Visitors Center

at (530) 538-2219. For information on the entire Feather Fiesta Days celebration, contact the Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce at (530) 538-2542 or access the Chamber's Web site at www.orovillechamber.net

Southern California

Staffers from DWR's Southern Field Division will take part in several special events during May.

On May 2-4, staffers will take part in the first annual Castaic Days, held at Castaic Lake. The event will include sand castle building, kayak and canoe rental, and a fishing derby.

On May 10, the Southern Field Division will host a DWR booth at Castaic Lake Water Agency's annual Open House event. They will assist children in making rainsticks, a type of tubular rattle instrument, associated with the onset of rain, which has been used ceremonially by diverse cultures.

On May 17-18, DWR staff will take part in Palmdale Water District's Annual Water Fair and Festival. A fishing simulator will be on hand and water safety on the State Water Project will be promoted.

DWR Visitor Centers

May marks the traditional start of vacation and travel season when visitation increases at DWR's three Visitor Centers. Open for public enjoyment free of charge, these visitors centers are: Vista del Lago at Pyramid Lake, near Gorman, in northern Los Angeles County just off Interstate 5; Romero Overlook Visitors Center at San Luis Reservoir just off State Highway 152 in Merced County, west of Los Banos, and Lake Oroville Visitors Center, 917 Kelly Ridge Road, overlooking Lake Oroville in scenic Butte County.

Phone numbers for the visitor centers are: Vista del Lago (661) 294-0219; San Luis (209) 827-5353; Oroville (530) 538-2219.

Vista del Lago reopened April 5 after a closure for lake dredging. Vista has extensive water displays and a great view of Pyramid Lake.

San Luis Reservoir is the largest offstream reservoir in the United States. The visitor center at San Luis Reservoir is now open seven days a week, due to addition of a second staffer, Jennifer Morgan, to the center. Previously Tour Guide Howard Berman had run the place alone, with the center closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The Oroville Visitors Center has displays on California water use and showing construction of Oroville Dam, tallest in the United States at 770 feet. A 47-foot tower at the center provides a commanding view of the lake, key Northern California storage reservoir for the State Water Project, and of the upper Sacramento Valley, including the Sutter Buttes.

All three centers are open all but three days a year. They are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas

and New Year's Day.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.