

Drought Recovery in Carpinteria

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Over the course of the six year drought, we strategically managed our water supplies in order to adapt to unpredictable winters and limited surface water supplies. When water levels in Lake Cachuma made a sharp decline, we relied heavily on the Carpinteria Groundwater Basin in order to meet local water demand. Carpinterians made lifestyle changes in order to save water in their everyday lives and help us achieve our water-savings goals. Many District customers participated in our rebate programs to reduce their water footprint. During the drought, over 300 high efficiency toilets and more than 50 high efficiency washing machines were installed. In addition, more than 2 acres of lawn were removed and replaced with drought-tolerant landscapes across our service area. We want to thank you for your conservation efforts during this drought period and hope that you will continue to use water wisely moving forward.

After years of unreliable surface water supplies, we finally felt some relief last winter when the Santa Ynez River watershed received above average rainfall and the lake level began to rise significantly. Although Lake Cachuma is currently at 80% of capacity, it is important to recognize that precipitation is highly variable in our region. Santa Barbara County as a whole received slightly above average rainfall last winter, but in Carpinteria we received below average rainfall. We live in an arid region and it is impossible to anticipate future winters and how much water will be available. In fact, this wet year could be an anomaly in a longer dry cycle, so it is important to make sure that we use what we have efficiently and make it last.

Many have seen the side-by-side images of Lake Cachuma that show the dramatic change in the water level from January to March of this year. For those who haven't had a chance to view the photos, they are available on the County of Santa Barbara Public Works Department's Twitter and Facebook pages. Consistent winter rains brought the lake from 36% capacity up to 80%, which made a remarkable visual difference. Although this was certainly an impressive transformation, Carpinteria's groundwater basin still needs time to recover after years of prolonged drought. We will need several consecutive wet winters to help recharge our aquifers before we start to see normal groundwater levels again.

Because of the wet weather this winter the District is proposing to lower its Stage Two Drought Condition to a Stage One Drought Condition, which would lift many mandatory drought

water-use restrictions. These regulations were enforced with warnings and fines which discouraged water waste and excessive consumption. Under the proposed Stage One Drought Condition the water use restriction will become voluntary practices and the conservation target will be reduced from 20% to 15%. It is still essential to avoid water waste and recognize that we need to make “conservation a California way of life”, which is also a goal of the State.

The District hopes that with continued efforts by the public, we can achieve a 15% water use reduction from pre-drought District-wide water use. If you are looking for some motivation, check out this year’s WaterWise 2019 High School Video Contest submissions at <https://www.youtube.com/user/WaterWiseSB/playlists> to learn about more ways you can save this valuable resource. For other District updates, please visit our website cvwd.net, follow us on Twitter @CarpWater, or like Carpinteria Valley Water District on Facebook.