**Drought Update**

**April, 2016**

The predicted El Niño rains have been a disappointment so far in Ventura County, with winter rainfall approximately 50% below average. **The drought continues**! Dry conditions are expected to continue through next year.

**Water Supply Status**

* Our well water is not expected to carry us through the summer. This will force us to purchase more water from Casitas MWD, as we did last year, making the water we deliver to you more expensive;
* Lake Casitas is at 41% of capacity. They will declare a *Stage 3 Drought* in a few months;
* Under Stage 3, we must reduce water usage by 30%, compared to pre-drought usage;
* Without rain, Lake Casitas could go dry in four years, leaving us with a very limited water supply;
* We don’t have any access to State water;

**What we are asking our customers to do**

* Please reduce your water demand by 30% or more, compared to pre-drought usage;
* Please stop watering your lawn, unless you operate a day-care center or have some economic need for a green lawn. Lawns can be reseeded when the drought is over;
* Please stop watering non-profitable or marginal orchards;
* Please postpone planting flowers or a garden until the drought has ended;
* Drought tolerant landscape is acceptable;

**Higher water rates**

It may seem unfair for water rates to rise when you are using less water, unfortunately, we must raise rates to pay for ongoing expenses.

* Due to reduced sales caused by drought, our revenues have fallen and we have been drawing from our cash reserves. We delayed rate increases in the hopes of a wet El Niño;
* Our last major rate increase was in 2012. Since then we implemented annual increases of 4% to account for rising costs;
* Last year, a judge in Orange County ruled against tiered rates imposed by another water agency. For that reason, we abandoned the tiered rates we were considering in response to the drought;
* We will send you a separate notice describing our proposed rates for next year;
* We will also be sending out notices for public hearings letting you know the date, time and location of the meeting. These will be included with your bill;
* Under our proposed rates, those who use the most water will pay a drought surcharge;