

EL NINO IS COMING!

Fall has arrived here in San Diego County and a wet winter is not too far behind. We have all been dealing with water shortages for so long we almost forget what it is like when we get prolonged periods of rainfall. While many of us have seen El Nino's sputter out over the years, the forecasters are saying that this one is here to stay. We can expect heavier than average rainfall starting later this month and going through the spring.



There are a couple of things that you should do to prepare. First, keep an eye on your irrigation timers. As the days grow shorter and weather cools down, our plants need less water – irrespective of whether it rains or not. Adjust your schedules downward so you can save both water and money! When it rains, turn the system off completely as a good rainfall will keep your plants happy for quite some time.

Another important thing to do is to prepare your property for runoff. Water will be running where it normally does not, so make sure your drainage pathways are clear and that water can't back up into your home or other areas where it is not wanted. If you are an agricultural customer, please get your BMPs installed to prevent runoff from carrying any fertilizers or other chemicals into our watershed.

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**STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT RELEASED**

Over the last year, RMWD's Board, staff, and ratepayer committees have been working on the development of a Strategic Plan. This plan is intended to clarify the Board's vision for the future and provide guidance to the staff at RMWD on where to focus our efforts. The plan clarifies our Mission Statement, identifies our Core Values, and establishes six Strategic Focus Areas:

- Water Resources
- Asset Management
- Workforce Development
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Customer Service
- Communication

At this point we need to get the input from our ratepayers into the plan. A copy of the plan is available on our website along with a link to email in your thoughts. We truly do want to hear from you on this important plan as it will shape how the Board makes decisions for years to come. You have a stake in the outcome, so if you get a chance, please take some time to read the document. It is not long – 7 pages total – so the time investment is not that great.

## CONSERVATION UPDATE

**RAINBOW  
MUNICIPAL  
WATER  
DISTRICT**

3707 Old Highway 395  
Fallbrook, CA 92029  
760-728-1178  
[www.rainbowmwd.com](http://www.rainbowmwd.com)

**2015  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Division 1  
Helene Brazier  
(760) 723-0465  
hbrazier@aol.com*

*Division 2  
Jack Griffiths  
(760) 940-8935  
arcus@dslextreme.com*

*Division 3  
Tory Walker  
(760) 414-9212  
tory@trwengineering.com*

*Division 4  
Bob Lucy  
(760) 728-8325  
bobl@delreyavocado.com*

*Division 5  
Dennis Sanford  
(714) 299-9865  
dennissanford@gmail.com*

### STAFF

**General Manager**  
Tom Kennedy

**Finance Manager**  
Midge Thomas

**Engineering Manager**  
Sherry Kirkpatrick

**Human Resources Mgr.**  
René Bush

**Operations Mgr.**  
Juan Atilano

As of the end of September, both of our main customer classes are exceeding their conservation goals. Our residential customers have now exceeded the 36% mandated cutback through the first three months of the fiscal year – great work! We are not looking for further cuts in this customer class.

Our Transitional Special Agricultural Water Rate customers, who were exempt from the State cutbacks but had a 15% cutback with fines if they did not achieve the goal have conserved 29% as of the end of September! This program has a specific allocation unlike the residential cutbacks mandated by the State. A number of our TSAWR customers have indicated that they are having potential crop losses related to the cutbacks. Since as a whole we are well under our allocations, the District can provide access to limited increases in individual allocations on a case by case basis. Please contact the General Manager for more information.

### WATER RATE HEARING DECEMBER 15, 2015

After holding the line on rates since early 2014, and faced with increasing costs from our water wholesaler, it is unfortunately time again to consider revisions to our water rates. This year the State Water Resources Control Board injected itself into the process and sped up our timetable for making rate changes. The SWRCB directed us to begin our rate hearing notices by November 1, 2015. All parcel owners and tenant ratepayers were mailed a notice on October 29<sup>th</sup>. If you have not received yours yet there is a copy of the notice on our webpage.

Complicating this change in our rates was a CA Supreme Court ruling upholding the findings of a lower court related to how water rates are calculated. The new ruling imposes much stricter rules on how we apportion the cost of service among various customer classes and meter sizes. The goal is to ensure that no customer class pays any costs that are not attributable to that customer class.

After over six months of work by our consultants and our Budget and Finance Committee, the revised rate structure has now been released for public comment. If you visit our website you will find additional information about the new rate structure as well as how it will impact the monthly bills of various classes of customers. With such a wide variety of customers, from small homes to massive agricultural enterprises, it is a challenge to come up with a rate structure that meets the needs of both. RMWD's board and staff worked hard to try to find the right balance.

Unfortunately, overall the cost of water is going up. The vast majority of the increases are from pass through of costs from the San Diego County Water Authority. What we have tried to do is to apportion the rate changes more accurately. For instance, some small residential customers will see their fixed fees go down but the variable fees go up. Customers in this class will see lower monthly bills if they use a small amount of water but their bills will go up if they use a lot of water. Our agricultural customers may see an increase in their fixed costs but the variable rate is either staying nearly flat or actually going down for our TSAWR customers.

Please take a look at the information in the mailer or on our website and let us know what you think!