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Resumed Delta Pumping Helps Zone 7 Meet Critical Needs

But Agency Still Urges Water Conservation

The Livermore-Amador Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency said Friday that the California Department of Water Resources' decision to resume minimal State Water Project pumping from the Delta is critical to meeting local water supply needs, but stressed that the agency still isn't out of the woods and called on the public to voluntarily conserve water.

“Without the minimal pumping from the Delta announced today, we were looking at the possibility of a 40-55% mandatory water-use restriction in a portion of our service area, and the possibility of compromised fire suppression in eastern Livermore,” said Jill Duerig, general manager of Zone 7. “Imported supplies from the Delta are critical to our operations during the summer months.”

Zone 7 wholesales water to nearly 200,000 people in Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin and Dougherty Valley, and supplies agricultural water for 3,500 acres, primarily vineyards, in the South Livermore Valley. The agency normally gets 80 percent of its water supplies conveyed through the Delta.

In addition to municipal supplies, Delta water is the sole water source for at least two-thirds of the Valley's viticultural operations that support a \$200-million-a-year wine industry. Without the additional pumping announced today, water supply to the majority of these operations would have been entirely cut off this weekend..

Since DWR's voluntary shut down of its Delta pumps on May 31, Zone 7 has been relying on its groundwater basin, water supplies stored locally in Lake Del Valle, and residual water in the State's conveyance system. Duerig said that because the restored Delta pumping may remain far below normal levels, Zone 7 will continue to rely

primarily on its emergency groundwater supplies to meet water demand throughout the service area. The agency is working with its water retailers -- the cities of Pleasanton and Livermore, California Water Service Company, and the Dublin San Ramon Services District -- to develop contingency plans to meet water demands under a variety of reduced Delta pumping scenarios that may extend into the future. This could include near-term actions to blend Zone 7's groundwater supplies with those of our retailers for distribution throughout the system to meet demands.

Zone 7 also is considering accelerating construction of its planned additional groundwater wells, as well as that portion of the future Altamont pipeline that will run through Livermore in order to enhance distribution of available supplies.

Currently, Zone 7 is asking its customers to voluntarily reduce water consumption by at least 10 percent through such actions as reduced outdoor watering of lawns, repair of leaking sprinkler heads and household plumbing, and turning off the hose when not needed during car-washing. Customers are encouraged to contact their individual retailers for more information on things they can do to reduce use by 10 percent.

In a voluntary, preventive move, the state shut down its Delta pumps on May 31, 2007 to help protect the endangered Delta smelt, which were clustered in the immediate vicinity of pumping plants in the San Francisco/Sacramento San Joaquin Bay-Delta (Delta). The adjacent federal pumps (Central Valley Project), still in operation, have not taken any smelt during the past 10 days, indicating the fish have started migrating away from the area.

As reported recently, the Delta smelt have sharply and precipitously declined in numbers. Potential causes currently being explored by scientists include invasive species, toxics, power plant operations, local diversions by farmers, and Delta pumping operations. However, a definitive factor for the fish decline has not yet been identified. The SWC has demanded that the State Legislature direct other responsible state agencies to move quickly to consider those other stressors and immediately implement protective measures.

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The Zone 7 Water Agency is one of the 10 active zones of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The District was established by the State Legislature in October 1949 to solve problems of flooding, drainage, channel erosion and water supply and conservation in Alameda County. In 1957, by popular vote, Zone 7 became a special district governed by a seven-member board of directors. Along with flood protection, Zone 7 supplies water to all of eastern Alameda County and a population of nearly 200,000. Treated water is sold wholesale to local retailers, including the cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Dublin San Ramon Services District, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 also distributes untreated water to local agriculture operations and golf courses.