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Lack of Rainfall Reduces Artificial Stream Releases
Groundwater Recharge Along Arroyo Mocho Temporarily Curtailed

Due to an unusually dry winter to date, the Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency is gradually turning off the recharge spigot normally used on Arroyo Mocho through Livermore to help replenish the underground water basin.

Although Zone 7 expects to see a reduction in its state water allocation for 2007, the agency will have ample water supplies this year to meet all customer demands with existing local and offsite groundwater storage.

During normal rainfall years, Zone 7 releases surplus imported Delta water from the South Bay Aqueduct down Arroyo Mocho to augment natural flow that seeps into the groundwater basin.

But with January being one of the driest on record, and with Zone 7 still unsure of its state water allocations for 2007, the agency -- at least for now -- is curtailing its recharge on Arroyo Mocho and instead sending the water to its treatment plants for municipal use.

"California's natural hydrology is one of extremes," explained Zone 7 Assistant General Manager Jill Duerig. "This is why wise water management is so critical to our communities."

Artificial releases were cut Thursday from 15 cubic-feet-per-second to 5 cfs. They will be cut again Friday from 5 cfs to 2 cfs and, on Monday, be shut off completely. A natural flow of about ½ cfs will continue.

In gradually reducing releases on Arroyo Mocho, Zone 7 hopes to ensure the drying-out period is slow and mimics what would happen naturally in a low rainfall year.

“Our practice is to make release changes slowly to allow habitat to adjust,” said David Lunn, who heads up Zone 7’s Water Resources Division.

Artificial releases down Arroyo del Valle will continue because under state permits allowing Zone 7 to use part of Lake Del Valle for water storage, Zone 7 must provide minimal flows below the dam to maintain habitat conditions for fish and wildlife.

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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 more than 190,000. 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.