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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Foothill Water Agencies Hustle to Keep Supplies Flowing After Canal Break

AUBURN -- The Placer County Water Agency is striving to keep customers supplied with water after a major break on the Pacific Gas and Electric Company Bear River Canal cut water flows to the Agency and its customers.

PG&E spokesman Paul Moreno said the incident was reported about 5 a.m. Tuesday (Apr. 19) at a remote location near Colfax, below Rollins Reservoir. He said the canal was flowing at a rate of about 400 cubic feet per second when the break occurred and that flows into the canal were stopped directly following the report.

Moreno said the company is still assessing damages but it appears a section of the large canal ruptured after a supporting earthen berm collapsed. Water from the canal ran about 100 feet down the steep canyon wall into the Bear River.

“The canal system was inspected by foot patrol on Apr. 1,” Moreno said. “No potential issues were identified at that time. It is not known at this time if heavy recent rains may have contributed to the earthen berm failure.”

Meanwhile, PCWA, which receives most of its water supply through the PG&E canal system, was working under emergency procedures to re-route water supplies to the Agency’s network of canals and to water quality plants in order to serve its treated water customers.

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Canal Break, page two

PCWA immediately took proactive steps to open interties with Nevada Irrigation District (NID) and City of Roseville and began pumping water from the American River to make up for some of the water shortages.

Even so, PCWA Director of Field Services Mike Nichol said irrigation water customers would be impacted the most and that there will be shortages and rolling 24-hour outages until PG&E supplies to raw water customers are fully restored.

PCWA General Manager David Breninger said, "The agency is focused on how to best serve our customers. Treated water customers will be impacted to a lesser extent; but shortages and rolling 24-hour outages are expected, unfortunately, to impact up to 4,000 customers who use raw water from the PCWA canal system until repairs can be made by PG&E to their canal and flows are fully restored to PCWA."

Breninger said, "PCWA is urging all water customers, those using treated, metered water, as well as those using canal water, to please conserve water and to use it efficiently and wisely during the emergency."

Also, NID, which receives water through the same PG&E Bear River Canal for service to irrigation water users in the rural Auburn to Lincoln area, was working with PCWA and making arrangements for alternate water supplies to its Placer County service areas.

Nichols said, "PG&E has advised PCWA that it was unknown at this time how long it will take to repair the PG&E canal and how long the water shortage would last."

A similar incident occurred Apr. 10, 1996 when the Bear River Canal ruptured near the Bear River Campground. The water supply emergency lasted several weeks as PG&E worked its way through a lengthy permitting and repair process.

More information on the water emergency and the areas affected is being made available on the PCWA website at www.pcwa.net.

The agency's Customer Service representatives may be reached at (530) 823-4850.