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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Conservation Urged

PCWA Faces Emergency; Pushes PG&E for Canal Repair

AUBURN – “Crisis management is in full swing at the Placer County Water Agency, where the agency’s primary supply of water remains severed two weeks after an Apr. 19 failure of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s Bear River Canal,” said PCWA Chairman Lowell Jarvis.

The canal conveys water to PCWA Zone 1 customers. The supply serves a huge area including Auburn, Newcastle, Loomis Basin, Rocklin, Lincoln and other communities and farms. The PCWA Board of Directors met in special session Tuesday afternoon (May 3) for another briefing on the situation.

The agency will host a public outreach and informational meeting on the water crisis at 5:30 p.m. today (May 4) and again Thursday (May 5) at 5:30 p.m. (which follows a regularly scheduled 2 p.m. Thursday board meeting). The May 4 and 5 informational meetings will be held at the PCWA Business Center located at 144 Ferguson Road in Auburn.

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A water emergency declaration is under consideration for a public hearing at 5:30 p.m. on May 10 at the Gold Country Fairgrounds, Auburn. (In anticipation of a large crowd and parking, the meeting was moved from the Auburn Holiday Inn.) The public hearing on May 10 at the Auburn Fairgrounds will include a public informational session starting at 5:30 p.m. with the Board meeting and hearing to commence at 6:00 p.m.

PCWA General Manager David A. Breninger said, "Currently, the area most impacted is Upper Zone 1 where 50 percent or less of normal supplies are available for our customers." He said, "The situation, unfortunately, will only grow worse as the weather warms and water demands rise."

In a May 2 letter to PG&E's corporate office in San Francisco, Jarvis wrote, "Unless PG&E can provide at least significant amounts of temporary water supplies within days, the damage to PCWA's 150,000 water users, their property, their livelihoods, their businesses and their livestock will be dire if not catastrophic."

An estimated 40-foot section of the Bear River Canal was ruptured when the land beneath it slid down a canyon wall above the Bear River, about 1.5 miles downstream from Rollins Reservoir. At the time, the canal was carrying about 400 cubic feet of water per second (cfs). PCWA is entitled to as much as 244 cfs of the total. "Currently no water is flowing to PCWA from the breached canal which is the cause of the water supply crisis," said Breninger.

Attending the PCWA board meeting was Alvin Thoma, PG&E's director of power generation, who said the company recognizes the urgency of the situation and a rapid repair is a top priority at every level of PG&E management. He said PG&E is mobilized at the site, studying best options for temporary and permanent repairs, and should be able to announce a plan "in a matter of days."

Thoma said a temporary bypass could carry from 150-200 cfs of water. PCWA Director of Strategic Affairs Einar Maisch added that the agency, at minimum, definitely needs at least 80 cfs to get through the coming weeks.

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In reports to the board, Breninger and members of his management team reported on system adjustments, rerouting of water supplies, rotating water outages for irrigation water customers, and cooperative efforts with surrounding water suppliers.

Rui Cunha, assistant director for emergency services for Placer County, said the incident could be included in a county emergency declaration. Brad Harris, division chief for CALFIRE, said firefighters are concerned about wildland and residential fires that could occur during a water shortage. A preliminary estimate given at the meeting indicated initial Placer County agriculture could face \$10 million in losses due to an extended water shortage.

Short of a rapid solution, PCWA customers may face voluntary to mandatory water restrictions. Rotating outages already have been implemented on the most seriously impacted irrigation customers, those on canals in the greater Auburn to Newcastle areas.

“PCWA is asking all customers to conserve water now,” said Breninger.

“We’re asking our customers for their continued support, understanding and conservation during this time of crisis,” said Jarvis.

The PCWA website (www.pcwa.net) is being updated daily on the water shortage emergency and includes outage information and maps of affected areas. Customers may also call the PCWA Customer Services Center at (530) 823-4850 or toll-free (800) 464-0030.