

*Serving Placer County Residents Since 1957*

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**2002 Report to  
Irrigation Water  
Customers**

# PCWA UPDATE

*Placer County Water Agency*

VOLUME 16 • NUMBER 1 • IRRIGATION REPORT, SPRING, 2002



## **Water Gate**

**Canal Operator Dave Thompson turns water into the Hanson Spillway from the Boardman Canal.**

## **Irrigation Season Opens**

***Welcome to the 2002 Irrigation Season!***

**M**ore than 4,000 seasonal and year-around raw water users rely on the PCWA canal system for their irrigation water needs.

The water agency's raw water distribution system includes 165 miles of canals and raw water pipelines that carry water to customers all along the Interstate 80 corridor, from Alta, through Auburn and Rocklin to agricultural lands west of Lincoln.

Irrigation water is used on large and small farms and ranches to grow crops and livestock. PCWA water irrigates pasture for cattle and sheep, home gardens, orchards, rice fields, vineyards and ranchettes. Nurseries and golf courses also are among PCWA customers.

Customers receive raw water by the miners' inch, a water measurement that dates to the Gold Rush. A miners' inch is  
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## **Public Health Mandate**

***No Canal Water for  
Drinking, Cooking,  
Oral Hygiene***

**T**he Placer County Water Agency has been ordered by the state Department of Health Services to enforce provisions of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and the California Health and Safety Code which prohibit the use of canal water for drinking, cooking and oral hygiene.

The agency was given a June 18 deadline and has submitted a compliance plan which has been approved by the Department of Health Services. In the past, PCWA has not been required to monitor how customers use water.

### **Lengthy Process**

The recent enforcement has been several years in coming. PCWA has conducted an extensive customer survey and notification program and has received compliance from 97 percent of the more than 2,500 canal water customers contacted.

Customers have complied by reporting that they have alternate sources such as piped treated water, wells or  
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## 2002 Irrigation Season

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the amount of water that will flow through a one-inch-square orifice, which equals 11.22 gallons per minute. Customers are presently using from one-half to about 80 miners' inches, depending on need.

In addition to individual customers, the raw water canal system delivers water to PCWA's network of water treatment plants and to several independent water suppliers who operate small community water systems.

PCWA employs a team of eight canal operators who are responsible for water flows, daily measurements, inspection, reporting and customer service. An ongoing maintenance program keeps the canal system in working order.

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## 2002 Rate Increases for Larger Users

Raw water customers will see rate increases of zero to 4 percent for the 2002 irrigation season.

The rate adjustments are part of an overall rate package adopted in November by the PCWA Board of Directors.

Customers who use 3 miners' inches or less will see no increase this year. A 4 percent increase was approved for customers using larger amounts. The rate adjustments affect customers in all service zones.

Increases are sometimes necessary in order to maintain levels of service and to upgrade aging water delivery systems.

## Hearing Set May 16 on EIR for American River Pump Project

A public hearing is scheduled May 16 on environmental studies for PCWA's estimated \$30 million permanent pump station on the American River.

The 7 p.m. hearing will be hosted by the PCWA Board of Directors in the Placer County Board of Supervisors chambers, 175 Fulweiler Avenue, in Auburn.

PCWA has been planning the pump station for several years in order to restore access to water supplies it lost in 1975 when the Auburn Dam project was abandoned. Without the permanent pumps, the federal Bureau of Reclamation sets up a temporary pumping system each summer at an annual cost of about \$250,000.

The permanent pump station would supply up to 35,000 acre-feet of water per year to western Placer County. The project, however, has been complicated by concerns over recreation, river access, a proposed pedestrian bridge, the introduction of colder water into Auburn Ravine and other environmental concerns.

PCWA plans to begin construction later this year and complete the pump station in 2004.

## Public Health Mandate

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springs. Others are taking part in approved bottled water distribution programs.

By this Spring, however, 160 canal water customers had not responded and will face a termination of PCWA canal water service by June 13.

Customers who have no other approved source of water for drinking, cooking and oral hygiene are urged to contact the agency immediately to avoid termination of canal water service.

The PCWA compliance plan, approved by the Board of Directors, includes a series of three letters to all remaining noncompliant canal water customers who will be advised of the law and given 30 days to comply.

Those who have not signed up for bottled water or another approved source by mid-May will be issued 14-day notices of service termination, with turnoffs beginning in early June.

Over the past few years, PCWA has worked with state officials to ease impacts and to allow more time for canal customers to comply with the law.

### Bottled Water Alternative

For compliance through the bottled water alternative plan, the state is requiring PCWA canal customers to subscribe to an approved bottled water delivery program of at least 5 gallons per month. PCWA has a list of state-approved distributors who will document sales and report back to the water agency. In turn, the agency must report back to the state on a regular basis.

Canal water customers who have not complied are encouraged to comply. Information is available by contacting the PCWA Customer Service Center at (530) 823-4850 or (800) 464-0030.

## Canal Improvements Continue in 2002

The Placer County Water Agency is making good use of a \$1.3 million water efficiency grant obtained in 2001 through CALFED and the California Department of Water Resources.

Sixty percent of the funding is being used for the application of gunnite, a concrete lining, which helps reduce leakage and seepage in the canal system. Sections of canal totaling one mile were completed in the first year of the three-year program.

The remaining funding is for the installation of electronic measuring stations at 12 remote sites on the canal system. The stations allow for more precise measurement and management of water supplies. Site selection is now being completed for this project.

### 2002 Flume Projects

The agency is continuing its program of flume repair and replacement, primarily in Zone 3 where terrain is steeper and flumes are more prevalent.

Flume replacements are typically two-year projects, with the wooden understructure replaced one year and the tin flume lining the second year.

This year's flume work is planned mostly on the Boardman Canal. The two Pulp Mill flumes near Alta, the Kingston Flume above Colfax, the Miller and Johns flumes above Auburn and the Rock Springs and Red Ravine flumes near Loomis are on the PCWA project list.



### Canal With a Gunnite Lining

The Boardman Canal east of Auburn has a gunnite lining to prevent leakage and water loss.

## PCWA Will Make Full Deliveries This Year

With an above average snowpack in the mountains, PCWA has been assured of adequate water supplies to meet raw water needs during the 2002 irrigation season.

By Apr. 1, the snowpack held 112 percent of average water content and a good spring runoff season was anticipated. A year ago at this time, PCWA measured just 61 percent of average water content.

### Water for Zone 5

Based on this year's water availability, the PCWA Board of Directors in March declared that up to 16,800 acre-feet of surplus irrigation water would be available and that the agency intends to deliver at least 13,600 acre-feet to agricultural customers in Zone 5 west of Lincoln.

## Irrigation Season Will End One Week Early in 2002-03

This year and next, PCWA's six-month irrigation season will be shortened by one week to accommodate canal maintenance work planned by the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. The PCWA system is supplied via PG&E.

The irrigation season typically runs from about Apr. 15 through Oct. 14 in Zone 1 and from May 1 to Oct. 14 in the higher elevation Zone 3.

This year, the season will wind down at midnight on Oct. 9. This will allow crews to begin changing orifices and preparing for canal maintenance. In 2003, the irrigation season will also end a week early.

## Measurements Used in the Water Industry

### ACRE-FOOT

An amount of water that would cover one acre to a depth of one foot. One acre-foot equals 325,850 U.S. gallons, or 43,560 cubic feet.

### MINERS' INCH

An amount equal to 1.5 cubic feet or 11.22 gallons per minute.

### MINERS' INCH DAY (MID)

An amount totaling 16,156.8 gallons, or 2,160 cubic feet.

### CUBIC FOOT (CF)

An amount equal to 7.48 gallons

### CUBIC FOOT PER SECOND (CFS)

An amount equal to a flow of 449 gallons per minute

## Wildflower Display in PCWA Lobby

The native wildflowers of Placer County are featured in a new lobby display at the PCWA Business Center in Auburn.

Designed and set up by agency employee Susan Cavrikas, the display includes photos, silk flowers, dried flowers and a variety of supporting items. Flowers are all identified by their scientific and common names.

The exhibit opened in late March and is open for public viewing during normal business hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.



Fairy Lantern  
White Globe Lily  
Calochortus Albus  
Lily Family (Liliaceae)

## PCWA Takes Part in K-8 School Water Education Program

PCWA is participating in a water education program for school children in grades Kindergarten through 8.

"Be Water Wise," a program coordinated by the Regional Water Authority and *The Sacramento Bee*, is being made available to Placer County schools through PCWA.

For information on the program, parents, teachers and others may contact the PCWA Customer Service Center at (530) 823-4850 or (800) 464-0030.

## Canal Outages Are Possible

Irrigation water customers should be prepared to deal with water outages, which can be the result of emergencies or planned maintenance.

Customers should know where water connections are located and be familiar with their private systems.

PCWA does its best to limit water service interruptions and, when possible, notifies customers in advance of any planned maintenance outages.

## WATER SAFETY

### Be Safe Near Canals, Streams

Children and adults should be aware of water safety, especially during spring runoff when rivers, streams and irrigation canals can be running high and fast.

Canals can be dangerous. They may look inviting, but banks are steep and slippery. Discharge pipes can pull a person underwater. Screens and trash racks designed to trap debris can also trap a person.

PCWA reminds parents, children and recreationists to use good judgment near fast water and to stay safely away from canals.

## How to Contact Your Elected PCWA Board of Directors

PCWA is an independent public agency governed by an elected Board of Directors.

Your directors are:

DISTRICT 1, Pauline Roccucci

Roseville, (916) 782-2708

DISTRICT 2, Alex Ferreira

Lincoln, (916) 645-2072

DISTRICT 3, Lowell Jarvis

Auburn, (530) 889-8836

DISTRICT 4, Mike Lee

Loomis, (916) 645-6705

DISTRICT 5, Otis Wollan

Colfax, (530) 346-7967

## Public Meetings

The Placer County Water Agency Board of Directors meets regularly the first and third Thursdays of each month at 3 p.m. in the Placer County Board of Supervisors chambers, 175 Fulweiler Avenue in Auburn. The public is welcome.

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