

Serving Placer County Residents Since 1957

IN THIS ISSUE



*Annual
Irrigation
Water
Newsletter*

PCWA UPDATE

Placer County Water Agency

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Farms, Ranches Rely on PCWA Canal System

*2003 Irrigation Season
Runs April into October*

More than 3,800 seasonal and year-around raw water services are supplied through the PCWA canal system.

The raw water canal system also supplies the agency's network of water treatment plants where clean drinking water is produced for domestic users.

The PCWA 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.

Many Uses of Water

Irrigation water is used on large and small farms and ranches to grow crops and raise 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.

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Irrigation Season Opens

Canal Operator Jamie Buland cleans the East Perry Canal at the Hansen orchards in Loomis.

PCWA Expects Normal Water Deliveries This Year

With an adequate snowpack in the mountains, PCWA expects to have enough water to meet the needs of irrigation water customers in all service zones during the 2003 irrigation season.

PCWA water comes from the mountain snowpack and by mid-March, the snowpack held about 80 percent of average water content for this time of year. A year ago at this time, water content was at 112 percent.

Most PCWA customers are supplied from the Yuba and Bear river watersheds with water that is delivered to PCWA via the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. canal system.

As of late March, the agency anticipated full deliveries this year from PG&E but had not yet received a formal commitment. Assurances are normally in place by Apr. 1.





Canal Operator Jamie Buland visits with Loomis orchardist Bob Hansen.


Water for Agriculture

Continued From Page 1

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

Others Rely on Canals

In addition to individual customers and water treatment plants, the canal system supplies a number of 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. 

Algae Control Program on Hold Canal Operators, Customers Work Together to Keep Canals Clear and Flowing

PCWA's effective algae control program remains suspended as a result of a federal appeals court decision in Oregon. Meanwhile customers and canal operators await the annual onset of algae.

Field Services Director Mike Nichol said the agency suspended its longtime use of copper sulfate two years ago because of the court order and is waiting for monitoring guidelines from state regulators or a review of the appeals court decision.

"Bluestone, or copper sulfate, inhibits the growth of algae and has been our major tool in preventing buildup," said Nichol.

"What we're seeing now is an increase in blocked intakes and screens on both PCWA and customers' service and delivery points," said Nichol. "Canal operations staff and customers must resort to hand removal of the algae from these locations. We're not really controlling algae; we're trying to minimize effects on our customers."

One Customer's Experience


Ken and Barbara Mackey are Loomis ranchers and longtime canal water customers. In fact, Barbara's grandfather built the Turner Canal from which they are served.

The Mackeys have two turnouts where they take water from the canal and algae has been a continuing problem. During hot summer weather, Ken says he must clean the turnouts every two hours, every day of the week. It used to be twice a day.

He is a strong supporter of PCWA's weed control program. "The bluestone works. They were really doing a good job. I've never seen a dead fish or turtle."

Everyone Can Help


Canal water customers can help keep the canal system flowing and in good working order.

- Never rake or sweep algae downstream where it will affect your neighbors. Remove algae from your service and from the canal.
- Take care not to introduce grass or weed clippings into the canal. Never dump leaves or other matter into the canal.
- Always remember that downstream customers also rely on the canal that passes through your property. 

Irrigation Season Will End One Week Early Again This Year

For the second straight year, 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. 9-10. This will allow crews to begin changing orifices and preparing for canal maintenance. 

Building a Better Water System



Gunite lining can reduce loss and make more water available to customers.

Reminder on Irrigation Water Rates for 2003

Raw water customers will see rate increases of 3 percent to 3.5 percent for the 2003 irrigation season.

The new rates were adopted by the elected PCWA Board of Directors in December as part of the agency's overall 2003 financial plan.

The rate adjustments affect year-around and seasonal raw water customers in all service zones and are effective Jan. 1, 2003.

PCWA reviews water rates on an annual basis. Increases are often necessary in order to meet increasing expenses, maintain good levels of service and rebuild an aging water system infrastructure.

Canal System Upgrades Will Continue in 2003

PCWA is working on several projects designed to increase the efficiency and reliability of the canal delivery system, reduce water loss and make more water available to customers.

These efforts are partially funded through grants from Calfed and include:

- Lining of canals with gunite to reduce water loss. During 2003, \$250,000 worth of gunite work is planned in Zone 1 and another \$50,000 worth of work is planned in Zone 3.
- Another \$100,000 is budgeted for gunite lining on canal sections leading to water treatment plants.
- Installation of a system of remote monitoring stations on the canal system is in progress. This \$500,000 project will allow canal operators to use real time flow information to supply water where it is needed and minimize waste at the ends of the canal systems.

Looking Ahead

PCWA also has obtained a \$100,000 grant from Prop. 13 that combined with a local match will fund three feasibility studies:

- A study of the raw water reservoir system to more closely match operation with water usage patterns.
- More efficient use and measurement of water to agricultural users in Zone 5.
- A study into efficiency gains realized through canal lining projects.

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 projects.

Customers should know where water connections are located and how to turn them on and off. Customers should be familiar with the operation of their own private systems.

Many customers have found it helpful to add on-site water storage tanks or reservoirs that can be used during times when flows are limited by work on the canal system.

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

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 under the water. 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.

PCWA Teams With PlacerGROWN

Exhibit Planned This Spring at the PCWA Business Center

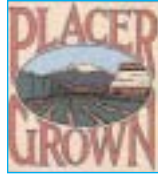
Many tasty fruits, vegetables and other products are raised by local growers right here in Placer County.

PlacerGROWN is a countywide cooperative marketing program that assists local growers.

Many local growers are PCWA water users and PCWA is a proud supporter of PlacerGROWN.

This Spring, beginning by late May, exhibits and tasting of local produce will be featured as part of a PlacerGROWN exhibit in the lobby at the PCWA Business Center in Auburn. Dates and times will be announced.

For information on PlacerGROWN, call (530) 889-7398. 



IN BRIEF

American River Pump Project Update

As Placer County uses more and more water, PCWA is pressing forward with efforts to construct the long-planned American River Pump Project.

The estimated \$31 million project, which will be built by the federal Bureau of Reclamation, is scheduled to go into construction this year and be in operation by April, 2005.

The project, which would replace a pump station PCWA had before it was removed for the Auburn Dam, would supply up to 35,500 acre-feet of water annually.

The overall project also includes state and federal funded river restoration and recreation elements.

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

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.

www.pcwa.net

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