

Nipomo votes for rationing

Cutbacks would start May 15 if drought goes on

By Tom Friesen
Staff Writer

NIPOMO — Residents who waste water when local wells start running dry will be punished with tight flow restrictions or complete cutoffs of service under an ordinance introduced Wednesday by directors of the Community Services District.

The first reading of the ordinance, which also calls for voluntary conservation beginning May 15, was passed on a 5-0 vote.

The second reading and final adoption is set for Jan. 22.

Under proposed state legislation, every urban water purveyor in California would have to come up with similar regulations to deal with potential shortages, according to Ryder Ray, the district general manager.

The ordinance calls for Stage I voluntary conservation between May 15 and Oct. 15 each year. Residents will be required to cut water use by 15 percent, using only an "amount absolutely necessary for health and business" during that time.

Ray said the last time the district sent out letters requesting cutbacks in water usage, residents managed to lower their usage by 15 percent.

Mandatory Stage II requirements will kick in when the district is pumping more than 1.5 million gallons a day for four consecutive days, or more than 1.9 million in a day.

Stage II requires that irrigation of vegetation only take place between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. on designated days. The irrigation could only be done with hand-held hoses, drip systems or permanently installed automatic sprinkler systems.

Cars, boats, trucks and trailers may only be washed at commercial car washes or service stations, and water from hydrants may only be used for fire suppression or other "activities immediately necessary to maintaining health, safety and welfare of citizens within the boundaries" of the district.

Ray, the district general manager. The ordinance calls for Stage I voluntary conservation between May 15 and Oct. 15 each year. Residents will be requested to cut their water use by 15 percent, using only an "amount absolutely necessary for health and business" during that time.

Ray said the last time the district sent out letters requesting cutbacks in water usage, residents managed to lower their usage by 15 percent.

Mandatory Stage II requirements will kick in when the district is pumping more than 1.5 million gallons a day for four consecutive days, or more than 1.9 million in a day.

Stage II requires that irrigation of vegetation only take place between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. on designated days. The irrigation could only be done with hand-held hoses, drip systems or permanently installed automatic sprinkler systems.

Cars, boats, trucks and trailers may only be washed at commercial car washes or service stations, and water from hydrants may only be used for fire suppression or other "activities immediately necessary to maintaining health, safety and welfare of citizens within the boundaries" of the district.

The district would move to Stage III restrictions when more than 1.9 million gallons are pumped for four consecutive days, or when 2.1 million gallons are pumped in one day, or when reservoir levels fall continuously and do not refill above 50 percent overnight.

Stage III would incorporate all the other restrictions and also prohibit the use of potable water for irrigating grass, ground cover, shrubs, crops, vegetation and trees.

Water usage would be limited to 75 gallons per day for each person.

The water department and manager would monitor the supply and demand during drought conditions and recommend to the board which conservation measures should be required. The board would make the

(Continued on page 9)

Nipomo set to impose mandate

(Continued from page 1)

final decision on when each stage is activated or ended.

For a first violation, a notice will be left with someone or posted in a conspicuous place at the offending residence or business.

A second violation will prompt a certified letter, return receipt requested, explaining the gravity of the situation and the penalties for further violations.

After a third violation, a flow restriction of one gallon per minute will be installed at the meter and left in place for 72 hours. The violator will be billed \$30 for installation and removal of the flow restriction.

A fourth violation would result in water being cut off and the meter removed. It will cost \$50 to get the water meter back.

In response to audience concerns, Ray said the gallon-per-minute flow would allow dishwashers to be used without damage and allow toilets to be flushed, although they would take longer to refill.

"It's the only way you can get the attention of the people," he said. "It's done in other places."

The ordinance also states that all customers are encouraged to install conservation devices such as low-flush toilets which use 1.6 gallons per flush, two gallon-per-minute shower heads and drip irrigation systems.

According to the ordinance, the average peak per-capita water use in the district "is in excess of that found in other communities which are similar by virtue of population and/or climate."

District resident Tarem Conforti asked the board whether future development would put a strain on the district's wells. "I would kind of resent going into Stage II because we went overboard" in approving new projects.

But Ray said the district is issuing will-serve letters at a rate that should keep the district out of Stage II.

Conforti also noted that some residents need water for their animals or trees, especially if they are

part of a business.

Ray replied that if a drought was bad enough to warrant the imposition of mandatory cutbacks, trees, shrubs or animals would not be the main concern. "People come first, unfortunately, or fortunately," he said.

In other action Wednesday, the board:

- Delayed a decision on changing its policy of no new annexations until the future of the district's water supply becomes more clear.

But board President David Manriquez said taking more area would improve service to local residents.

Director Kathleen Fairbanks added that expanding the boundaries could result in the district getting new wells on annexed land;

- Voted 5-0 to send out a quarterly newsletter in February, May, August and November informing district residents about water supplies, new development projects in Nipomo and related matters. Publishing the newsletter will cost about \$427 an issue, Ray said;

- Decided against making a recent ordinance retroactive. The ordinance allows developers who pay for lift stations or sewer lines to be reimbursed if subsequent developments take advantage of those facilities within the next 10 years.

"Retroactivity is a problem," said the district's legal counsel Art Shaw. "How far back do you go?"

Director Steve Small said the board wanted to be accommodating because the request for retroactivity came from a developer who was forced to build sewer facilities immediately, but knew that the ordinance would soon be adopted.

"We wanted to be good guys," Small said. "But administratively, it's probably not a smart thing to do";

- Responded to the county Planning Department's request for comments on two development proposals by saying there are no objections to a 17-unit apartment complex at Avenida De Socios and Division Street or a permanent Bank of Santa Maria branch on Tefft Street where a temporary facility now stands.



FLOODED — The Nipomo Little League field at Nipomo drought is still hanging around and the Nipomo Cor