

Is the Lake Casitas Recreation Area Financially Self-Reliant?

The Casitas Municipal Water District operates and maintains the Lake Casitas Recreation Area as an enterprise fund. This means all expenses are covered by “user fees” charged to park visitors. No taxpayer or water-ratepayer funding is used to balance the recreation area budget. While the recreation area has taken advances from the lakes’ water-drinking users, they have been paid back or are in the process of being repaid. The recreation area has balanced its budget over the last fifteen years. Brian Roney, Park Services Manager, said, “I work hard to make sure we stay on track with our operating budget and pay our way.” He also noted, “There are other regional recreation facilities where this is not the case and they could not survive on user fees alone.” Our research tells us that your Lake Casitas Recreation Area is the only public recreation area in our tri-county area that is self-sustaining.



New roads and improved campsites will encourage longer stays by park visitors who will then spend more in the park.

“Our park fees are very reasonable compared to other park/lake recreation opportunities,” said Roney.

An annual vehicle and boat pass are available for frequent park users. The Casitas Board of Directors recently approved a reduction in non-power boating fees for boats such as canoes, kayaks and float tubes. The launch fee is now only \$3.00 for all such boats. This reduction, in addition to the high lake levels, has led to an 84 percent increase in non-power boating activity, according to park records. “It is non-polluting and great exercise,” added Roney.

The recreation area budget includes an overhead charge that currently pays the Casitas District more than \$750,000 each year and has contributed nearly \$5.7 million to Casitas’ utility’s budget in the last 15 years. This charge helps offset the support provided to the park for

services such as payroll, purchasing, legal, board overhead, insurance, and related workers’ compensation coverage. It also means this fee is in addition to the annual depreciation charge, which covers advances for capital projects like roads and buildings.

“The recreation area has been advanced \$3 million for park improvements, like the new and successful Water Adventure, and is on track to paying this balance off within 10 years,” said John Johnson, General Manager for the Casitas Water District. “The recreation area has structured its improvements in the park so that they will generate revenue to help pay off the capital expenses. For example, new roads or improved campsites will encourage longer stays by park visitors who will then spend more in the park.”



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What Is the Current Status on New Water Services?

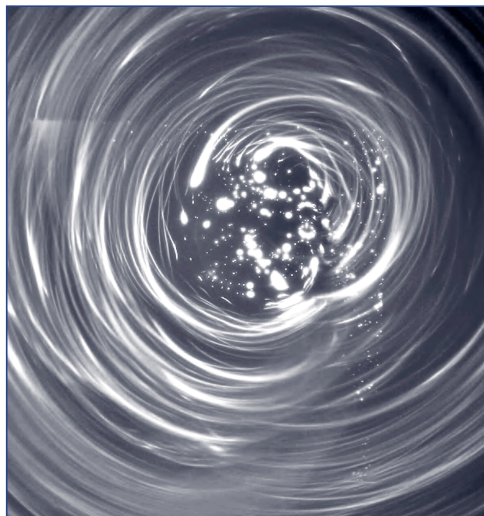


Casitas limits the number of people that can tap into the District's water supply.

New Customer Hook-ups of Concern to Casitas

Casitas has restricted the number of new water customers or new water allocations due to the limited amount of water available during a long-term drought. There are now 165 people on Casitas' allocation waiting list. As of late December, the District has offered water services to the first 85 people on the waiting list. Casitas is now working to process their applications. If those currently on the waiting list are not ready to proceed and pay their fees within 60 Days after reaching their turn they must begin the process of applying for a new water service all over again.

Casitas guarantees to provide a



Water shown going down a drain.

water supply to all of its current customers in a worst case twenty-one year drought scenario. However, Casitas' ability to accomplish this goal has been impacted by the recent federal mandate to make additional water releases down the Ventura River in support of the Endangered Southern California Steelhead. Casitas recently completed peer-reviewed water supply and demand study indicates Casitas' water supply could be insufficient to meet its customers' water demand due to the federal water release requirements. Casitas is striving to balance the water supply needs of all existing customers' with both their demand needs as well as the demand needs of any new customers to the District.

The Casitas Board of Directors approved allocating up to 26 acre-feet of water last year after identifying a new water supply, which has now all been allocated. A typical home uses about half an acre-foot of water per year. Casitas is currently weighing a variety of options that are anticipated to lead to the availability of additional water. A proposal to provide an additional 26 acre-feet of water is expected to come to the Board of Directors in the near future.

Casitas Recreation Area

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Roney also said, "The park is run like a private business with improvements in the park expected to help pay for the bills." A rundown and dilapidated facility will not attract and retain customers.

The high level of customer service is another indicator of the importance of attracting and retaining customers at the park. The park has camp hosts stationed throughout the park to answer questions and to help visitors enjoy all that the park has to offer. "So remember, next time you pay at the park gate – your money is being spent only at the park!" Roney exclaimed.

The recreation area has recently provided some improvements to campers in the form of a new 21 channel satellite TV system and a free outdoor family movie during summer weekends. The movies are featured on a giant inflatable screen near the park entrance. The park staff also recently designed a new Web site which has plenty of information on park activities, special event schedules and the current weather in the park. The weather station is located at the Santa Ana Launch Ramp and is a new wireless system that transmits all the data to the park office, then updates a page on the website. It is all located at www.lakecasitas.info.



The new and successful Water Adventure is on track to paying off money advanced within 10 years.

How Much Rain Is Needed Before Water Can Be Diverted to Lake Casitas?



It may have seemed like a lot of rain fell in October, but Casitas was not able to divert any water during this year's fall rainfall. More than six inches of rain must fall in a short time before the District can divert water from the Ventura River. Several days of rain is needed to saturate the dry riverbed so there is enough water running for diversions to take place. Casitas is also not able to divert water if the rainy season is sporadic and storms are spread out over time

because in that case, the soil has to become saturated all over again for river flows to occur.

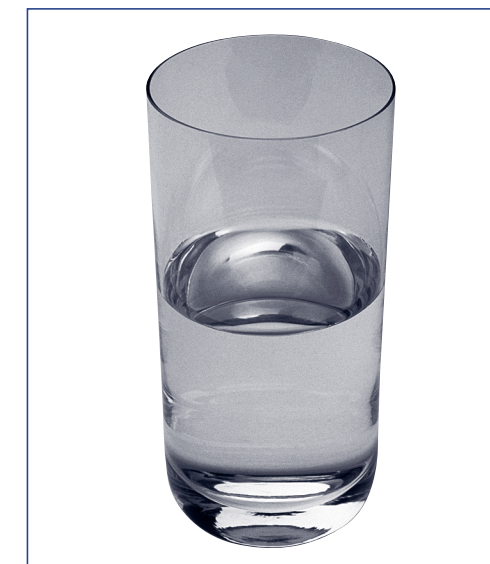
In December 2005, the water in Lake Casitas was only 8.73 feet below spill level and it contained 230,762 acre-feet of water. To fill the lake, it would take an additional 23,238 acre-feet of water, which is the same amount of water it would take to fill a container the size of a football field 4.45 miles high. It is also more than

Casitas provided customers for all of last year. Last year, the lake received enough water to fill that same container of water nearly 17 miles into the air. If this winter is only an average rain year, and the rainstorms occur within a short period of time from each other, then the lake should fill to its full capacity of 254,000 acre-feet of water. At that time, water will begin to spill over the spillway at the Dam. The last time Lake Casitas spilled was in the spring of 1998.

More Stringent Drinking Water Standards Established by EPA

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 2005 passed new regulations on drinking water disinfection and on disinfection by-products (DBPs). The EPA sets standards for tap water provided by public water systems to protect the public's health. Research on the impacts of DBPs on reproductive and developmental health is preliminary and inconclusive, but the water and scientific communities remain cautious about any potential harm that DBPs may cause.

The risk to public health from DBPs is extremely small compared to the health impacts from consuming inadequately disinfected water. Casitas is committed to providing drinking water that maximizes public health protection and that minimizes potential health risks. Casitas is working to reduce the levels of DBPs



Casitas' water safe to drink.

without diminishing the protection against waterborne diseases. DBPs are formed when chlorine mixes with naturally occurring organic material in water. For the past three years, Casitas has used chloramines for disinfection. Chloramines reduce the level of

unwanted DBPs in our water.

"The levels of DBPs found in our distribution system are below current standards," said Susan McMahon, Water Quality Supervisor for Casitas. She also stated, "If necessary, we will make further changes in water treatment to allow us to meet any new requirements. "Please be assured that Casitas' tap water is safe to drink. Although, there are some people that may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water such as people with compromised immunity. This could include people with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons having undergone a transplant or people with HIV/AIDS," stated McMahon. Customers concerned about their tap water can request a copy of Casitas' most recent Consumer Confidence Report or call McMahon at 805-649-2251, Ext. 120.

Here Is What We Do to Keep Water on the Way To Your Faucet Clear and Uncontaminated

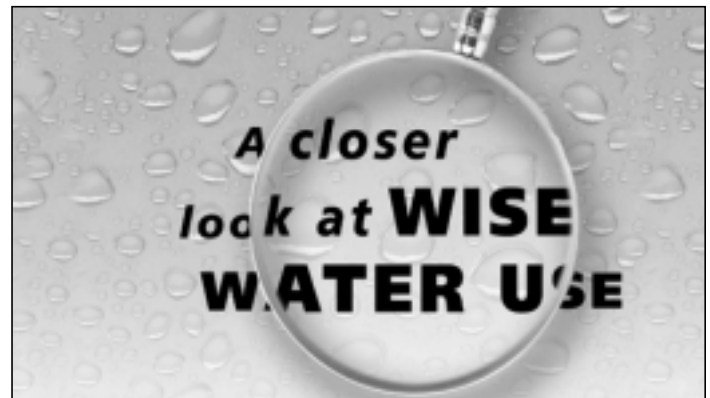
Your water is distributed in one direction: from Casitas' water treatment plant to you. Did you know that the flow of water can be reversed, flowing from your home or business into Casitas' water distribution system if certain precautions are not in place? This can happen when a break occurs in a Casitas' pipeline or with the flushing of fire hydrants. When water is being used by the fire department to put out a fire there can also be a sudden reversal of water. This is called **backflow**. The problem with water being introduced into Casitas' drinking water from an uncontrolled source is it could be of poor water quality. This contamination or pollution of the water distribution system could cause people to become sick unless proper precautions are taken.

In accordance with state law, Casitas requires any customer that has the potential to add unhealthy substances to the water system to have a **Backflow Preventer** installed at their water meter.

Cross-connection and Backflow Possibilities from Customers can Happen When a Customer has one of the following:

- An alternative water supply such as a well, stream, or spring;
- An agriculture irrigation system; or
- A commercial facility with fire sprinklers, lab equipment, or boilers, etc.

Failure to comply with backflow requirements will ultimately result in a customer's water service being disconnected after the customer has been given three opportunities to comply. For additional information on how to comply with backflow requirements please contact Ron Merckling at 805-649-2251 Ext. 118.



Efficient outside watering includes:

- Checking your sprinklers to make sure you have turned them back for the rainy season.
- Applying mulch to decrease evaporation, slow weed growth, and allow for soil to hold moisture better.
- Watering only those areas that require it. This could mean readjusting sprinkler heads or proper planning when installing new sprinkler heads or putting in new plants.
- Building basins or furrows around plants to increase soil saturation and to reduce runoff.
- Watering your soil deeply. Watering for a duration long enough to wet the root zone of your plants. Allow an interval of time before your next watering to let the top two inches of your soil dry out.
- Free Water Conservation Devices are available at Casitas' main office in Oak View, located at 1055 Ventura Avenue: We have low flow showerheads, kitchen aerators, and bathroom aerators.

Would you like a speaker to come and talk to your classroom, organization or business? Please call Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Coordinator, at 805-649-2251 ext. 118 or rmerckling@casitaswater.com, to talk about water conservation.

Casitas Worried About Water Supply For New Customers – Page 2



Casitas Municipal Water District

1055 Ventura Ave.
Oak View, CA 93022
805-649-2251
www.casitaswater.org

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