

Casitas Municipal Water District

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Baggerly/Spandrio

October 5, 2020

10:00 a.m.

The meeting will be held via teleconference
To attend the meeting call (888) 788-0099 or (877) 853-5247
Enter Meeting ID 946 6737 7024#

AGENDA

1. Roll call
2. Public comments
3. Board/Management comments
4. Review and discussion of draft Fall 2020 Newsletter mock-up.

Right to be heard: Members of the public have a right to address the Board directly on any item of interest to the public which is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. The request to be heard should be made immediately before the Board's consideration of the item. No action shall be taken on any item not appearing on the agenda unless the action is otherwise authorized by subdivision (b) of ¶54954.2 of the Government Code.

If you require special accommodations for attendance at or participation in this meeting, please notify our office in advance (805) 649-2251 ext. 113. (Govt. Code Section 65954.1 and 54954.2(a). Please be advised that members of the Board of Directors of Casitas who are not members of this standing committee may attend the committee meeting referred to above only in the capacity of observers, and may not otherwise take part in the meeting. (Govt. Code Sections 54952.2(c)(6).



Casitas Fall 2020 Newsletter

Your District Board of Directors

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GM's Corner

Greetings,

I am pleased to bring you the Casitas Municipal Water District's fall newsletter – an update on the District's work to deliver quality service and a more secure water supply.

The District is working to ensure the continued delivery of affordable, high quality water that our customers rely on to run their homes, farms and businesses, both now and into the future. Earlier this summer, the District released a public draft of our plan for a more sustainable water supply – the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan. The District is reviewing the thoughtful questions and feedback we received, and an updated draft of the plan will be released in 2021.

As we all continue to navigate COVID-19 safety guidelines, I am encouraged to see our District and

the community come together in new ways. Movie nights at Lake Casitas have been a highlight in recent months, and we look forward to continuing the family-friendly fun.

Currently, the Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA) is open to camping, vehicles, boats and walk-ins. The LCRA works with county health officials to manage the risk of COVID-19 spread, and we appreciate your patience as we navigate this unprecedented time.

We welcome any feedback you may have about our services. Please reach out at 805-649-2251 (ext. 0) or info@casitaswater.com.

Sincerely,

Mike Flood

General Manager, Casitas
Municipal Water District

Adjudication Update

The District is actively defending and protecting the District's water rights as part of the ongoing Ventura River Watershed Adjudication process. In September, the City of Ventura along with other major groundwater pumpers released a Draft Stipulated Judgment and Physical Solution for review. While the document raises some questions, Casitas is committed to working through the issues and evaluating every available option to reach a resolution that protects the interests of our District and those who rely on us.

The Casitas Board of Directors adopted a new City of Ventura Adjudication Charge which became effective on July 1, 2020 and now appears on customers' water bills. The purpose of this charge is to pay for the expense associated with the District's defense in the adjudication lawsuit. While the City of Ventura recently agreed that its legal costs will not be shifted to others responsibility in any outcome, it is still necessary for the District to fund its own legal defense until the active case is over, which is why the new charge remains important.

We know many customers have questions about the proceedings. Since this is an active legal case, there are some details which must remain confidential. At the same time, we would like to share information that is publicly available, and encourage readers to visit our online resources to learn more: www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/adjudication-information.

Comprehensive Water Resources Plan

This June, the District released a draft of the plan we have been working on to protect our water supply in Lake Casitas and provide recommendations to secure our water future – the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan.

The product of extensive study, research and public input, the plan assesses our community's water supply suitability to meet immediate and future needs. The plan found that, without action, Lake Casitas could be almost dry in the next 6 years if faced with continued drought conditions and higher temperatures. To address the need for more water, the plan outlines a forward-looking approach to developing a more sustainable, secure and diversified water supply portfolio.

Planning for our region's water future is our responsibility, but it is also an ongoing conversation with our community, and the District is grateful that so many voiced their opinions. The District is reviewing your feedback and will be making significant updates to the plan to reflect what we have heard. The District will be releasing a new version in 2021 for additional input from our community.

For more information on the plan, please visit: www.casitaswater.org/your-water/casitas-water-security.

Casitas' Community Survey Results

Earlier this year, the District conducted a Community Survey to better understand our community's attitudes and opinions regarding the District's services and priorities for securing our water future. We sincerely appreciate those who took the time to participate, here is a bit of what we heard:

- 95% listed a secure water supply as the most urgent local priority.
- 89% say it is important to preserve Lake Casitas.
- A majority want to reduce our reliance on the Lake as a source of supply and ensure access to adequate drinking water during future droughts.

The District plans to continue checking in periodically with the community, to ensure your priorities are ours as well.

Your District at Work: Project Updates

WILDFIRE RESILIENCY PROJECTS

Our thoughts are with communities throughout the state who are experiencing wildfires that are increasingly becoming our new normal with impacts of climate change. The escalating intensity of wildfires over the last few years demonstrate a pattern that we cannot afford to ignore. That is why the District has undertaken a series of wildfire resiliency projects to protect local infrastructure and help to avoid any disruption to the critical water services during future emergencies.

One project on the horizon is the installation of emergency backup generators to ensure District operations can continue with minimal interruption in the event of a power outage. The District has applied for a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant to secure additional emergency backup generators.

ROBLES FISH SCREEN PROJECT

For nearly 20 years, the District has been working to protect the endangered Southern California Steelhead (steelhead trout). Under a 2003 Biological Opinion, the District installed a state-of-the-art Fish Passage Facility and has reduced its water supply diversions to provide for instream flows that mimic natural storms.

Our ongoing improvements at the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility have reached a new stage. Fish screen testing is underway, and the upgraded fish screens and equipment will improve the efficiency of the District's diversions to Lake Casitas while protecting the endangered Southern California Steelhead.

Learn more about diversions here: www.casitaswater.org/your-water/learn-about-diversions

OJAI WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

In August of 2013, Ojai's Golden State Water customers voted for the District to acquire Golden State's Ojai water system after concerns were raised regarding the high price the private water company was charging compared with the District's water rates. When the District finally acquired the Ojai Water System in 2017, we took over management of the system whose aging infrastructure required immediate rehabilitation and replacement.

The District has now completed main replacement projects on Sunset, Ventura, Emily and Canada Streets and customers will benefit from increased reliability because of these upgrades. These projects replaced old and undersized pipelines, upgraded fire hydrants, and replaced valves and service lines.

These infrastructure improvement projects are funded through a voter-approved tax on properties within the Ojai Water System, and the District is proud that we are still able to provide our customers with affordable, high-quality water while maintaining significantly lower water rates.

COMING SOON!

On November 30, the District will begin construction on the West Ojai Pipeline replacement project. Construction is expected to take four months and will cause some disruption to traffic while we work to upgrade vital infrastructure.

Employee Spotlight

In late August, Carol Belser retired after 11 years as the Park Services Manager, overseeing the Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA). Carol was a valued member of the Casitas team and a true public servant.

During her tenure, Carol was instrumental in improving the experience of visitors to the LCRA. As Park Services Manager, Carol partnered with state and federal government agencies to expand the LCRA, remove invasive species that threaten lake ecology and water supply infrastructure, and worked hard to secure peace officer status for all the Park Rangers who are stewards of our local LCRA treasure.

Carol's tenure has been a credit to our community. Her leadership will be missed, and we offer her our most sincere appreciation for her work and best wishes for a well-deserved retirement.

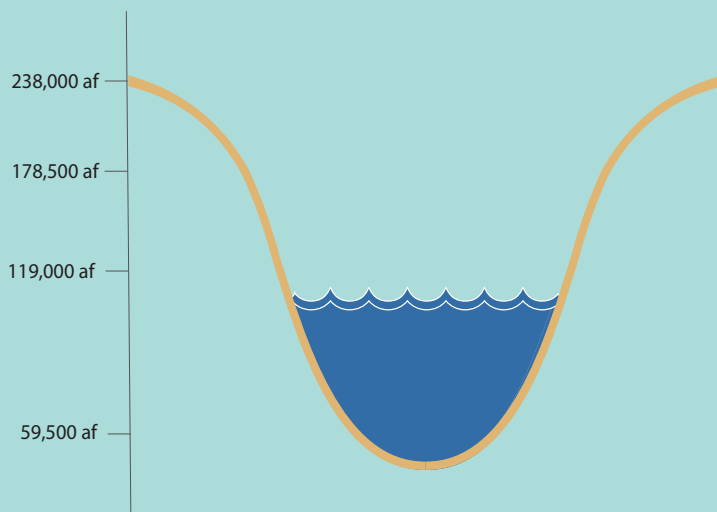
Put Down New Roots!

As we enter fall, now is the ideal time to plant drought-tolerant, native plants in your garden. Native plants can help give you a drought-tolerant, beautiful garden, with less maintenance and watering. And by planting now, your garden will have the time to become established with winter rains before it heats up again next year. Throughout the District, landscaping water usage represents over 50% of residential water needs, and transitioning to drought-tolerant, native species ensures that our precious water resources are used as efficiently as possible.

Here are six top tips for a water-efficient landscape:

1. Ask your local nursery for suggestions on native plant species to best meet your landscape needs
2. Install efficient, low volume irrigation systems throughout your yard
3. Group plants with similar water needs
4. Use drought-tolerant plants in sunny, dry and windy areas
5. Planting trees can lower surrounding air and soil temperatures – helping to reduce plant and soil moisture loss
6. Use a thick layer of mulch to ensure soil moisture retention

For more information on native plants and drought-tolerant landscaping, visit: www.casitaswater.org/landscape.



Casitas Lake Level Update

As of September 24, Lake Casitas held approximately 98,000 acre feet of water, which is about 41% of its total capacity.

**An acre foot is defined as the volume of water necessary to cover one acre of surface area to a depth of one foot.*