



Casitas Newsletter Spring 2023

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GM's Corner

Greetings,

I am pleased to bring you the Casitas Municipal Water District's spring newsletter: an update on the District's work to deliver quality service, a more secure water supply and public recreation opportunities.

- **Water Supply:** This year brought an end to several years of abnormally low rainfall and the severity of our community's water shortage has been greatly relieved. After receiving 46 inches of rain over the winter, Lake Casitas water storage rose from 31% to over 70% and groundwater basins have been significantly replenished. The recent drought is the longest lasting in Casitas' history and displayed our community's ability to pull together to conserve water supplies. Your diligence to use water efficiently remains important to save water for future dry years -- we don't know what future weather patterns will bring to our water supply.
- **Your District at Work:** With the tremendous amount of rain this year, Casitas experienced storm damage at several of our facilities including the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility. The dedicated staff at Casitas worked long hours under difficult conditions to ensure drinking water continues to be available to its customers. Several ongoing projects

continue to make significant progress, including replacement of the pipeline in Ojai Avenue and the Ventura-Santa Barbara Counties Intertie. Read more about these projects inside.

- **Recreation Update:** It is wonderful to be at Lake Casitas with rising lake levels. The lake is open for boating and day use, although boaters should use caution due to shallow vegetation in the water and floating debris. Work is currently underway to build a replacement water play structure at the Lake Casitas Recreation Area. We are excited to offer this brand-new play structure to children and families along with the very popular lazy river to help you stay cool on hot days. The facilities are anticipated to be open to the public on May 27. Both the play structure and the lazy river use recirculating water through an upgraded treatment system to maximize conservation.

Thank you for your interest in your local water district, serving our community for more than sixty years.

Regards,

Mike Flood, General Manager

Your District at Work

The District has completed multiple projects to upgrade the aged Ojai Water System since acquiring the system in 2017. For the West and East Ojai Avenue pipeline project, the new 8-inch pipeline has been installed on most of the project area in Ojai Avenue (Highway 150), with the remaining installation scheduled to be complete by the end of June 2023. After all the pipeline is installed, the road will be paved where the pipeline trenches are located. There will be temporary water system shutdowns to connect the new pipeline to the existing water system, and affected customers will be notified at least 48-hours in advance.

For more information on the Ojai Water System improvement projects, please visit: www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/your-district-at-work.



Casitas is making progress on the Ventura-Santa Barbara Counties Intertie to provide a more reliable water supply during future droughts and emergencies. The District is working to secure grants and loans to substantially fund the project construction. Federal and State funding sources include the United States Bureau of Reclamation, United States Environmental Protection Agency, State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Department of Water Resources. In March 2023, the Board of Directors adopted findings in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Permits for the pipeline construction are in progress, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act.

The January 2023, extreme storms damaged several District facilities. The District has been working on temporary and permanent repairs to ensure drinking water is available to its customers and will be seeking funding for the repairs from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Water Supply Status

An extraordinary amount of precipitation was delivered this year alleviating drought conditions across the State. Locally, this season brought approximately 46-inches of rainfall at Casitas Dam, well above the average of 17-inches. As of May 2, 2023, the water level in Lake Casitas was 173,440 acre-feet or 73% of capacity, a substantial increase over the starting lake level of 73,500 acre-feet or 31% on January 1st of this year. Total lake inflows from the Ventura River via the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility were over 46,000 acre-feet, with the remaining lake inflows coming from direct watershed areas including Santa Ana Creek and Coyote Creek.

Water supply conditions are reviewed by the Casitas Board of Directors annually in the spring, after the typical rainy season has ended, for consideration of necessary customer conservation mandates. In April, the Casitas Board determined a Stage 1 condition exists based on current water levels. Under Stage 1, extraordinary conservation actions previously taken on the part of the public to reduce water use and remain within water allocations in response to drought are encouraged but not mandatory. The penalties assessed for water used in excess of allocations will be discontinued as of June 1, 2023. There remains a potential that mandatory allocations and restrictions for water use may be necessary in future years, should dry conditions return. Ongoing water waste prohibitions will remain in place as described in the Conservation Corner of this newsletter.

For more information about Casitas water supply, please visit: www.casitaswater.org/your-water/casitas-water-security

Operations at Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility

As of the end of April 2023, water supply diverted from the Ventura River into Lake Casitas via the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility was over 46,000 acre-feet, the highest since the fish screens and passage facility were installed. This year was the 2nd highest water supply diverted since the original project construction in the 1950's, just behind the record of over 50,000 acre feet during the devastating storms of 1969.

Unlike other reservoirs such as Matilija Reservoir, the Casitas Dam forming Lake Casitas is located on a tributary system rather than the mainstem of the Ventura River. Casitas diverts water from the Ventura River at the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility (Robles Facility). In the Ventura River watershed, extremely high flow events are filled with sediment and debris which can damage the Robles Facility, as was the case on January 9-10, 2023. After this occurred, Casitas staff worked around the clock to make swift repairs and the facility was operational within five days. Additional work is needed to fully restore the facility.

Operation of the Robles Facility involves maximizing diversions to Lake Casitas up to the capacity of the diversion canal while also providing for environmental flows within the Ventura River, specifically for the endangered Southern California Steelhead.

For more information about diversions can be found here: www.casitaswater.org/your-water-learn-about-diversions



Photo above is circa 2019 prior to the sediment removal activities that occurred in 2019 and 2021.



Photo above is from January 10, 2023 following the storm damage that occurred on January 9-10, 2023. The timber cutoff wall was breached on the eastern side causing flows to go around the diversion and fish passage structures, and the facility was filled with sediment and debris.



Conservation Corner

While water supply conditions have improved, next winter's hydrology is uncertain and ongoing customer efforts to use water efficiently and preserve water supplies remain important in the event of future dry conditions. Customers are strongly encouraged to continue efforts to save water, in particular continuing efficient landscape water use and taking advantage of the water conservation opportunities offered by Casitas.

As always, enforcement of water waste prohibitions remain in effect; water runoff is prohibited, and leaks must be fixed as soon as reasonably possible. Permanent water waste restrictions adopted by the Casitas Board of Directors and the State of California include:

- Potable water may not be used to wash down sidewalks and driveways.
- Runoff caused by irrigation is prohibited.
- Vehicles must be washed using a hose with a shutoff nozzle.
- Decorative water features must use recirculated water.
- Outdoor irrigation is prohibited during and within 48-hours following measurable rainfall.

For more information on conservation, visit www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/water-conservation