Everyone can benefit from water efficiency

In January, Gov. Brown issued a drought proclamation that, in part, asks all California residents and businesses to voluntarily reduce water consumption by 20 percent.

Current water supply conditions throughout the state are uncharacteristically dry with a very low probability of full recovery to normal conditions this water year, evidenced by the 0 percent allocation announced by the Department of Water Resources this year for all public water agencies that buy from the State Water Project.

This declaration is not anticipated to affect the district’s Colorado River water supplies, which are defined by federal shortage criteria tied to the elevation of Lake Mead. The Colorado River benefits from an extremely large system of reservoir storage; however, it is facing its own hydrologic challenge with potential shortages projected for non-California water users as soon as 2016-2017.

Although the Colorado River snowpack this year is average, little effect is expected due to the long-term nature of the drought.

While IID already operates under a reasonable and beneficial use standard, the governor’s announcement should be viewed as a renewed call for all Californians to implement conservation measures and be good stewards of this important natural resource.

Residents are encouraged to do their part and contact their local municipal water providers for a list of conservation tips or incentive programs designed to lower consumption. Additional information is available on the Internet at sites such as http://saveourh2o.org.

QSA/payback implementation status

IID is working to provide water accounting numbers for 2013, which are due to the State Water Resources Control Board at the end of March. The district was required to pay back a minimum of 55,710 acre-feet in 2013; IID was able to conserve that amount and more through the Fallowing Program and seepage recovery pumps.

For 2014, the Inadvertent Payback Policy Payback schedule requires a minimum of 154,738 acre-feet be conserved. This is expected to be reduced by a like amount of IID’s early 2013 payback. Later this spring, the Bureau of Reclamation’s final review will be reflected in the 2013 Decree Accounting.

IID wishes to extend its appreciation to its growers for participating in the voluntary programs and for being so diligent with the apportionment plan that is in place.

(continued on reverse)
Update: Equitable Distribution Plan

IID's Equitable Distribution Plan is in full swing, having started Jan. 1, 2014. Under the plan, every field has an apportionment, which is calculated based on 50 percent historical use and 50 percent straight line.

While the district tracks water use, the water user is ultimately responsible for the volume of water used. Information about each field’s apportionment is available on the water billing statements and will be available through the web portal.

To help ag water users manage their apportionment, those who have more than one water account can combine the accounts into a farm unit, to manage the water for the overall unit.

For ag water users who either have too much or too little apportionment, water can be transferred through the agricultural water clearinghouse where redistribution is done monthly. To date, the clearinghouse has received requests for additional water. All requests, if received by the 20th of the month, will be considered. If you were unable to receive the water you requested, your request will roll over to the next month to be equally treated with all other requests.

It’s important to note that any water requested from the clearinghouse must be paid for up front regardless if it is used or not. Also, if you need to give water back, someone must be willing to take it in order for it to be transferred.

“It’s in all water users’ interests to keep close tabs on their water use and attempt to balance their water needs,” said Carlos Villalon, assistant water manager. “Water users will need to do a good job of planning, and IID is here to help with that.”

Update: Ag water clearinghouse

Agricultural water users are reminded that water is available through the agricultural water clearinghouse. All offers to transfer water in or request water out need to be made by the 20th of each month.

Water users can initiate a transfer request by submitting a completed IID Clearinghouse Notice of Transfer form to the IID division office, or to the Water Department at headquarters. The form and instructions are available at www.iid.com/edpforms.

Clearinghouse transfers are required to be prepaid before the water is transferred. This will help prevent hoarding of water and protect the landowner so they won’t be responsible for the additional water a tenant may have acquired, should the tenant not consume all the water.

Requests from the clearinghouse will be filled equitably on a per-acre basis. When there is more water available than requested, all requests will be filled in that month’s redistribution. Any remaining water in the clearinghouse will roll over and be redistributed the following month. However, if the total water requested exceeds the available amount, all requests will be equally filled according to the lowest acre-foot/per-acre request until the available water is fully subscribed.

As a rule, it is prudent for agricultural water users to plan ahead by preparing a farm water budget so they can determine if they need to request more water to finish their crops. This would also apply to any accepted water determined to exceed crop requirements, so it can be offered for transfer through the clearinghouse.

Keep current with important dates and deadlines

IID’s website now has a dedicated page to help water customers plan for upcoming deadlines and events. Topics include:

- Following Program
- Apportionment & Equitable Distribution Plan
- On-Farm Conservation
- System Conservation

To view the latest on all of IID’s programs and to register for email alerts, visit www.iid.com/waterdates