

The background of the cover is a collage of three images. The top image shows a green industrial valve with a handwheel. The middle image shows a dynamic splash of water with many bubbles. The bottom image shows a close-up of dry, cracked earth in shades of blue and grey.

Water Shortage Contingency Plan for the Ventura River Water District

Water is a precious resource in California, and maintaining its quality is of utmost importance to safeguard the health of the public and the environment.

**Water Supply Contingency Plan
for
Ventura River Water District**

VENTURA RIVER WATER DISTRICT

409 OLD BALDWIN RD, OJAI, CA 93023

PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM: CA5610022

JULY 1, 2023

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Summary

This Water Shortage Contingency Plan (the “WSCP”) is to provide guidance for how the Ventura River Water District (the “District”) intends to act in the event of an actual water shortage condition. The District’s mission is to reliably distribute high-quality water, while making effective use of water resources in a professional, knowledgeable, environmentally sustainable, and fiscally responsible manner. Reliable, high quality water service is critical to an economically and environmentally vibrant community. This WSCP is part of a management policy for improved preparedness for droughts and other impacts on water supplies.

The WSCP plans for a water supply shortage and provides pre-planned guidance for managing and mitigating a shortage by defining six potential water shortage stages. Stages 1 - 5 address a slowly developing drought and are tethered to Casitas Municipal Water District’s Water Efficiency and Allocation Program (WEAP). Stages 1 through 5 are defined based on Casitas lake levels. Stage 6 is associated with a catastrophic interruption of water supplies such as an earthquake, fire, regional power outage or other emergency.

The District’s water shortage planning is aimed at addressing supply shortages ranging from a slowly developing drought to sudden and potentially catastrophic interruptions, such as major system failures and/or earthquakes or other natural disasters. Stage 1 through 5 address drought conditions, and Stage 6 reflects a catastrophic emergency in which the Emergency Response Plan would be implemented. By having a plan in place, the District can plan and respond to actual conditions with predictability and accountability.

This document was prepared in accordance with Water Code Section 10609.6 and contains all the mandatory elements. This WSCP is consistent with Casitas Municipal Water District’s (“Casitas”) Water Shortage Contingency Plan and prepared in coordination with Meiners Oaks Water District to ensure consistent water supply messaging of local water supplies.

Section I: Declaration of Policy, Purpose, and Intent

In order to conserve the available water supply and protect the integrity of public water system (PWS) supply facilities, with particular regard for domestic water use, sanitation, and fire protection, to protect and preserve public health, welfare, and safety and minimize the adverse impacts of water supply shortage or other water supply emergency conditions, the District hereby adopts the following regulations and restrictions on the delivery and consumption of water through Resolution 2023-356 Adoption of Water Shortage Contingency Plan.

Water uses regulated or prohibited under this WSCP are considered to be non-essential and continuation of such uses during a Stage 5 condition are deemed to constitute a waste of water subjecting the offender(s) to enforcement as defined in Section XI of the WSCP.

Section II: Public Involvement

Opportunity for the public to provide input on the WSCP was provided by the District at a properly noticed Board meeting on June 21, 2023.

Section III: Public Education

The District will regularly provide the public with information about the WSCP, including information about the conditions under which each stage of the WSCP is to be initiated or terminated and the drought response measures to be implemented in each stage. Detailed information on public education is provided in Section X of the WSCP.

Section IV: Coordination with Regional Water Planning Groups

The service area of the District is located within the Casitas Municipal Water District regional water planning area. The regional water planning area assessment documents were considered in the development of the WSCP. A copy of the final WSCP was posted on the District's website (venturariverwd.com) on June 22, 2023.

Section V: Authorization

The Board will approve the applicable provisions of this WSCP upon determination that such implementation is necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare. The General Manager, or designee, shall have the authority to initiate or terminate drought or other water supply emergency response measures as described in this WSCP. The contact information for the General Manager is 805-646-3403 and via email at: Office@venturariverwd.com.

Section VI: Application

The provisions of this WSCP shall apply to all persons, customers, and property utilizing water provided by the District. The terms "person" and "customer" as used in the WSCP may include individuals, corporations, partnerships, associations, and all other legal entities.

Section VII: Definitions

For the purposes of this WSCP, the following definitions shall apply:

Conservation: those practices, techniques, and technologies that reduce the consumption of water, reduce the loss or waste of water, improve the efficiency in the use of water, or increase the recycling and reuse of water so that a supply is conserved and made available for future or alternative uses.

Customer: any person, company, or organization using water supplied by the District.

Domestic water use: water use for personal needs or for household or sanitary purposes such as drinking, bathing, heating, cooking, sanitation, or for cleaning a residence, business, industry, or institution.

Landscape irrigation use: water used for the irrigation and maintenance of landscaped areas, whether publicly or privately owned, including residential and commercial lawns, gardens, golf courses, parks, rights-of-way and medians.

Section VIII: Summary of Water Shortage Stage Triggers and Response Actions

The General Manager, or designee, shall monitor water supply and/or demand conditions on a monthly basis and shall recommend to the Board of Directors when conditions warrant initiation or termination of each stage of the WSCP, that is, when the specified “triggers” are reached.

The triggering and termination criteria described in subsequent sections of this WSCP are based on:

- Level of water storage in Lake Casitas;
- Groundwater well elevations and/or well production capacities relative to system demands;
- County, State or Federal Drought Emergency Orders; and
- Emergencies such as fire, earthquake, etc. resulting in potential water outages.

The response actions described in subsequent sections of this WSCP are based on the following general precepts:

- Conservation techniques employed include progressively implementing more strict water use policies and restrictions, primarily focused on outdoor irrigation and increasingly restrictive water use. In natural disaster type scenarios, water supplies may be limited based on a per capita per day scenario.
- Notification of the public is performed in a variety of ways to ensure drought or other water shortage messaging is received by the residents. Depending on the severity of the drought stage or other water shortage condition, this may include messages on the District’s website, bill stuffers, drought banners and newsletter media. Whenever possible, messages will be provided in English and Spanish. Messaging will also be coordinated with the Casitas Municipal Water District because they provide the backup water supply for the District.
- The District will coordinate with a variety of agencies, including the Casitas Municipal Water District, Meiners Oaks Water District, City of Ojai, Ventura County Environmental Health Division, State Water Board’s Division of Drinking Water, and the Upper Ventura River Groundwater Agency (UVRGA). In the event of severe water shortages, the District will also coordinate with Ventura County Public Health to support County registered vulnerable persons, and Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (OES).

The following table summarizes each water shortage stage, specified triggers, response actions and termination actions. Additional information for each stage is provided in the subsequent sections.

Response Stage	Event	Trigger	Response Action	Termination Action
STAGE 1 VOLUNTARY	Normal conditions.	Lake Casitas level between 100% - 50%	Encourage water conservation practices, water waste prohibitions, and drought-tolerant landscaping. Ongoing water conservation campaign. Voluntary 20% reduction in water use.	In place indefinitely during normal conditions.
STAGE 2 WARNING	Anticipated drought conditions.	Lake Casitas level between 50% - 40% Minor water outage due to minor distribution equipment failure and/or small power outages.	Encourage drought-tolerant landscaping and water conservation. Outdoor water budget reduced by 20%. Ongoing water conservation campaign.	Lake Casitas level above 50%. Upon termination of Stage 2, Stage 1 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.
STAGE 3 EMINENT	Below normal precipitation for a prolonged period.	Lake Casitas level between 40% - 30% Serious water outage due to distribution equipment failure and/or power outages.	Mandatory 30% reduction in water use. Outdoor water budget reduced by 30%. Intensify water conservation campaign. Consider increasing Abusive Water Waste Penalty.	Lake Casitas level above 40%. Upon termination of Stage 3, Stage 2 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.
STAGE 4 SEVERE	Below normal precipitation for a prolonged period.	Lake Casitas level between 30% - 25%	Mandatory 40% reduction in water use. Outdoor water budget reduced by 40%. Intensify water conservation campaign. Consider increasing Abusive Water Waste Penalty.	Lake Casitas level above 30%. Upon termination of Stage 4, Stage 3 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.
STAGE 5 CRITICAL	Below normal precipitation for a prolonged period.	Lake Casitas level between 25% - 0%	Outdoor water budget reduced by 50%, then transition to 0% as lake level drops. Consider setting health and safety allocations on a per capita amount. Consider increasing Abusive Water Waste Penalty.	Lake Casitas level above 25%. Upon termination of Stage 5, Stage 4 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.
STAGE 6 CATASTROPHIC	Complete water interruption. Water contamination.	Well/pump failure and/or major tank/transmission main failure and/or severe power outage. Well and/or distribution system contamination. Natural disaster that interrupts water supply.	Restrict use for health and sanitation purposes only. Reduce as much usage as possible. Distribute health advisories; may prohibit use completely. Restrict outdoor water use completely.	Interruption is repaired or a backup water supply has been provided. Health advisory lifted by DDW. Upon termination of Stage 6, stage in effect immediately prior to trigger of Stage 6 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.

Section IX: Descriptions of Water Shortage Stages – Triggers and Responses

The primary source of water available to the District is the from the Upper Ventura River Groundwater Basin. The sustainable yield of the basin is estimated to be between ~5,500 to 5,600 AF/year (2022, UVRGA Groundwater Sustainability Plan). The groundwater basin has demonstrated the ability to quickly recharge within any year with sufficient rainfall. However, the basin has a very small amount of groundwater storage which rapidly and naturally drains to the Ventura River and the ocean during dry periods. During extended drought periods, the groundwater basin can become depleted due to lack of recharge, pumping, natural drainage and evapotranspiration. The Lake Casitas surface water supply serves as the back-up water supply to the groundwater supply during extended droughts. The drought response triggers are based on the level of water storage in Lake Casitas.

The District's water shortage planning is aimed at addressing supply shortages ranging from a slowly developing drought to sudden and potentially catastrophic interruptions, such as major system failures and/or earthquakes or other natural disasters. Stage 1 through 5 address drought conditions, and Stage 6 reflects a catastrophic emergency in which the Emergency Response Plan would be implemented.

The goals of the Staged Demand Reduction are to:

- (1) Conserve water supply for the greatest priority and public benefit; and
- (2) Mitigate the water shortage effects on public health and safety.

Stage 1 -- VOLUNTARY Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Achieve a voluntary 20% percent reduction water usage.

Trigger:

Enacted when Lake Casitas storage is between 100% - 50% of capacity. A voluntary 20% demand reduction is in effect.

Response Actions:

- (a) The interties with Casitas Municipal Water District will be exercised annually, except the Villanova intertie which is exercised every two months to ensure proper operation.
- (b) Abusive Water Waste Penalty remains in effect so customers know when they are using more water than necessary and are wasting it.
- (c) Water customers are requested to voluntarily limit landscape irrigation use to the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.
- (d) Monitor groundwater elevations, production rates and demand rates, and be prepared to activate Well #6 if supplemental use of Lake Casitas water is imminent.
- (e) Water conservation banners installed during summer months.

Notification Method(s) (as described in Article X below) and Frequency:

Methods: 1, 2, and 4 (via monthly bills) – Permanent website, monthly outreach

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

Termination:

Stage 1 of the WSCP always remains operative unless superseded by a more severe stage.

Stage 2 – WARNING Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Achieve a 20% percent reduction in water usage.

Trigger:

Enacted when Lake Casitas storage is between 50% - 40% of capacity and the Casitas Municipal Water District has declared a Stage 2 drought condition with a mandatory 20% demand reduction.

Response Actions:

- (a) The interties with Casitas Municipal Water District will be exercised annually, except the Villanova intertie which is exercised every two months to ensure proper operation.
- (b) Continue to organize and ensure joint messaging and actions between Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District on future drought stage responses.
- (f) Monitor groundwater elevations, production rates and demand rates, and be prepared to activate Well #6 if supplemental use of Lake Casitas water is imminent.
- (g) Water conservation banners installed during summer months.

Notification Method(s) and Frequency:

Methods: 1, 2, 3, and 5 (via bill and separate conservation flyer). At least monthly outreach.

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

Termination:

Stage 2 of the WSCP may be rescinded when all the conditions listed as triggering events have ceased to exist. Upon termination of Stage 2, Stage 1 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.

Stage 3 – EMINENT Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Achieve a 30% percent reduction in total water usage.

Trigger:

Enacted when Lake Casitas storage is between 40% - 30% of capacity and the Casitas Municipal Water District has declared a Stage 3 drought condition with a mandatory 30% demand reduction.

Response Actions:

- (a) The interties with Casitas Municipal Water District will be exercised annually, except the Villanova intertie which is exercised every two months to ensure proper operation.
- (b) Continue to organize and ensure joint messaging and actions between Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District on future drought stage responses. Joint public workshops may be appropriate for messaging.
- (c) Increase conservation messaging with banners, bill inserts, website and newsletter.
- (d) Consider increasing the Abusive Water Waste Penalty.
- (e) Monitor groundwater elevations, production rates and demand rates, and be prepared to activate Well #6 if supplemental use of Lake Casitas water is imminent.

Notification Method(s) and Frequency:

Methods: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (via bill and separate conservation flyer), 6. At least monthly outreach.

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

Termination:

Stage 3 of the WSCP may be rescinded when all the conditions listed as triggering events have ceased to exist. Upon termination of Stage 3, Stage 2 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.

Stage 4 -- SEVERE Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Achieve a 40% percent reduction in total water usage.

Trigger:

Enacted when Lake Casitas storage is between 30% - 25% of capacity and the Casitas Municipal Water District has declared a Stage 4 drought condition with a mandatory 40% demand reduction.

Response Actions:

- (a) The interties with Casitas Municipal Water District will be exercised annually, except the Villanova intertie which is exercised every two months to ensure proper operation.
- (b) Continue to organize and ensure joint messaging and actions between Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District on future drought stage responses. Joint public workshops may be appropriate for messaging.
- (c) Increase conservation messaging with banners, bill inserts, website and newsletter.
- (d) Consider increasing the Abusive Water Waste Penalty.
- (h) Monitor groundwater elevations, production rates and demand rates, and be prepared to activate Well #6 if supplemental use of Lake Casitas water is imminent.

Notification Method(s) and Frequency:

Methods: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (via bill and separate conservation flyer), 6. At least monthly outreach.

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

Termination:

Stage 4 of the WSCP may be rescinded when all the conditions listed as triggering events have ceased to exist. Upon termination of Stage 4, Stage 3 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.

Stage 5 -- CRITICAL Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Achieve a 50% percent reduction in total water usage.

Trigger:

Enacted when Lake Casitas storage is between 25% - 0% of capacity and the Casitas Municipal Water District has declared a Stage 5 drought condition with a mandatory 50% demand reduction.

Response Actions:

- (a) The interties with Casitas Municipal Water District will be exercised annually, except the Villanova intertie which is exercised every two months to ensure proper operation.
- (b) Continue to organize and ensure joint messaging and actions between Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District on future Drought Stage Responses. Joint public workshops may be appropriate for messaging.
- (c) Increase conservation messaging with banners, bill inserts, website and newsletter.
- (d) Decrease flushing from regular flushing routine to only as needed for colored water or other water quality issues.
- (e) Monitor groundwater elevations, production rates and demand rates, and be prepared to activate Well #6 if supplemental use of Lake Casitas water is imminent.
- (f) As Lake Casitas levels drop plan for additional decreases in outdoor use and potential per capita refinement of the Health and Safety allocations.

Notification Method(s) and Frequency:

Methods: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (via bill and separate conservation flyer), 6. At least monthly outreach.

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

Termination:

Stage 5 of the WSCP may be rescinded when all the conditions listed as triggering events have ceased to exist. Upon termination of Stage 5, Stage 4 becomes operative

unless otherwise specified.

Stage 6 – CATASTROPHIC Water Shortage Conditions

Target: Cease all outdoor irrigation. Limit use to essential uses.

Trigger:

Enacted when a catastrophic event occurs such that no water can be supplied due to infrastructure damage or failure. Such an event would trigger the implementation of the District's Emergency Response Plan.

Response Actions:

Follow recommended response actions in most recently adopted Emergency Response Plan.

In the event that water outages occur and the Casitas Municipal Water District interties are not available, the District will coordinate with the County Office of Emergency Services and/or CalWARN as soon as possible if hauling of water is needed.

In the event that the water shortage threatens public health, safety or welfare, the District will consider setting health and safety allocations on a per capita basis. The per capita amount would be as defined by the District and subject to decreases pending the severity of the emergency. An example of such an allocation plan is based on 45 gallons per person per day with all outdoor uses prohibited and summarized as follows:

Single-Family Residential Customers

The allocation to residential water customers residing in a single-family dwelling shall be as follows:

Persons per Household	Units per Month
1 or 2	1 - 4
3 or 4	5 - 8
5 or 6	9 – 12
7 or greater	Allowable usage will be calculated using 2 units per person per month.

Additional decreases to the table may be required for short-term emergency response to earthquakes, fires, etc. Any short-term decrease (defined as less than 72 hours) will be determined by the General Manager.

Multi-Family Residential Customers

The allocation to residential water customers billed from a master meter which jointly measures water to multiple permanent residential dwelling units (*e.g., apartments, mobile homes, etc.*) shall be allocated the same as single-family residential customers.

Commercial Customers

A monthly water allocation shall be established by the General Manager, or designee, for each commercial water customer. The allocation to commercial water customers shall be as follows: 40% of monthly water usage and no irrigation. All restaurants shall only provide water upon request, hotels must only wash linens upon exist of customers, and all commercial customers must post drought conservation messaging.

Agencies Contacted:

Contact Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District to coordinate future actions.

If adequate water supply will potentially become unavailable for fire response, medical services, public services, etc., then the following emergency providers will be notified as soon as possible to ensure that adequate planning, response and assistance may be provided:

Local Fire Agency: Shall be contacted immediately when any water outages are believed to be potentially imminent or is occurring in any part of the distribution system.

Critical Service Providers (*e.g., hospital, school, elder care, etc.*): The hospital, elder care facility and school district shall be immediately contacted when any water outage is believed to be potentially imminent or is occurring in the distribution system that may in any way impact that user.

State Water Board and/or Ventura County Environmental Health: The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water and the Ventura County Environmental Health Division shall be contacted when any water outage is believed to be potentially imminent or is occurring in the distribution system.

County Office of Emergency Services: The County Office of Emergency Services may be contacted when any water outage is believed to be potentially imminent or is occurring in the distribution system as the result of a natural disaster

and/or additional County or State support is needed.

Termination:

Stage 6 of the WSCP may be rescinded when all of the conditions listed as triggering events have ceased to exist. Upon termination of Stage 6, the stage in effect immediately prior to the trigger of Stage 6 becomes operative unless otherwise specified.

Section X: Notification Methods; Public Safety and Support Services Contacts

Notification Methods

The General Manager, or designee, shall monitor water supply and/or demand conditions on a monthly basis and, in accordance with the triggering criteria set forth in Section IX of this WSCP, shall determine if a water shortage condition exists and the severity of any such water shortage conditions (*e.g., 1-Voluntary, 2-Warning, 3-Eminent, 4-Severe, 5-Critical, 6-Catastrophic*), and shall implement the following notification procedures accordingly:

Description of Customer Notification Methods:

The General Manager, or designee, shall notify the public by means of the following methods for the applicable water shortage stage, as provided in Section IX above:

- Method 1: Notice on the District's website and newsletter
- Method 2: Notice in Ojai Valley newspaper, joint messaging with Casitas Municipal Water District and Meiners Oaks Water District
- Method 3: Email to customer listing
- Method 4: Direct Mail to each customer, in bill or flyer format
- Method 5: Door to door outreach in elderly communities, County registered vulnerable residents, residences with high usage, and/or parts of the distribution system impacted by emergency
- Method 6: Personal phone calls to elder care facilities and schools
- Method 7: County Emergency Messaging text alert
- Method 8: Emergency press releases to local radio and TV station.

The District has a 19% Spanish speaking population, therefore Methods 1, 3, 4, and 5 shall be provided in both English and Spanish.

Prepared materials from Department of Water Resources, "Save Our Water Toolkit", may be used as drought communication tools with the District logo added. The link for these materials is provided below:

<https://saveourwater.com/en/Partner-Toolkit>

Public Safety Contacts:

The General Manager, or designee, shall notify directly the following individuals and entities of restrictions or water shortages, as defined in the subsections below, as appropriate for each response stage.

Organization or Department	Name & Position	Telephone	Email
Fire Department/HazMat	Battalion Chief	(805) 649-6013	
Police Department	Ojai Police Department	(805) 646-1414	
County Office of Emergency Services (OES)	Water Agency Contact, Daniel Cohen	(805) 654-2551 (805) 654-2311	dcohen@calleguas.com
Ventura County Watershed Protection District		(805) 654-2018	
Ojai Valley Sanitary District (Wastewater)	Jeff Palmer, General Manager	(805) 646-5548 (805) 340-5585	jeff.palmer@ojaisan.org
County Environmental Health		(805) 654-2813 (805) 654-2818	
Edison (Electric Utility)	Erik Barlow	(951) 970-5956	erik.barlow@sce.com
State Division of Drinking Water	Jeff Densmore	(805) 566-1326	jeff.densmore@waterboards.ca.gov
LARWQCB	Renee Purdy, Executive Director	(213) 576-6600	renee.purdy@waterboards.ca.gov
Mutual Aid Contact	Mike Flood, General Manager of Casitas Municipal Water District	(805) 746-2251 (805) 649-2251	mflood@casitaswater.com
Meiners Oaks Water District	Justin Martinez, General Manager	(805) 646-2114 (805) 297-7240	justin@meinersoakswater.com

Support Services Contacts:

The following is a listing of support services that may be appropriate for a water shortage emergency.

Organization or Department	Name & Position	Telephone	Email
Ventura River Water District	Mark Albertsen, Lead Water Operator	(805) 701-0695	mark@venturariverwd.com
Ventura River Water District	Craig Lee, Water Operator	(805) 798-4895	craig@venturariverwd.com
Ventura River Water District	Sam Hall, Water Operator	(805) 707-4461	sam@venturariverwd.com
Ferguson Pipe Supply	Shane McBride	(805) 310-6887 (805) 644-7279	shane.mcbride@ferguson.com
Superior Tank	George Marquez	(562) 946-8804 (800) 221-8265	george@superiortank.com
Edison (Electric Utility)	Erik Barlow	(951) 970-5956	erik.barlow@sce.com

Section XI: Enforcement

- (a) No person shall knowingly or intentionally allow the use of water from this water system for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, governmental, or any other purpose in a manner contrary to any provision of this WSCP, or in an amount in excess of that permitted by the drought response stage in effect at the time pursuant to action taken by the General Manager, or designee, in accordance with provisions of this WSCP.
- (b) Any person, including a person classified as a water customer of the District, in apparent control of the property where a violation occurs or originates shall be presumed to be the violator, and proof that the violation occurred on the person's property shall constitute a presumption that the person in apparent control of the property committed the violation, but any such person shall have the right to show that he/she did not commit the violation.
- (c) Abusive Water Waste Penalties shall be assessed when water use exceeds regulated amounts set under this WSCP. Such excess usage is considered to be non-essential and deemed to constitute a waste of water.