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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PCWA Board Declares Drought Emergency

AUBURN -- Directors of the Placer County Water Agency on Thursday (Feb. 6) declared a drought emergency condition in western Placer County and outlined several steps that may be necessary to stretch limited water supplies.

Meeting before an overflow crowd of about 80 people, directors heard a staff presentation on this year's water outlook before opening a public hearing that drew 20 concerned citizens to the podium.

As rain fell outside and forecasts called for significant rains to come, water agency leaders cautioned that one storm will not recover us from the months of record dry weather this far into the water year, which began October 1, 2013.

Many of the speakers were from the Placer County agricultural community, who expressed concerns over canal water deliveries that could be reduced by 50 percent or more.

Farmers in the Zone 5 service area west of Lincoln were heartened when the PCWA board withdrew a proposal to suspend sales of supplemental PG&E water to their service area. Board members directed staff to evaluate options and cost for providing service to Zone 5 and said the matter would be reviewed at future meetings before a final determination is made.

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In declaring the drought emergency, the board:

- amended agency rules to prohibit the waste or unreasonable use of water.
- said any new treated water connections approved during the drought emergency would not be able to irrigate landscaping or fill water features or swimming pools until the emergency is declared over.
- indicated that delivery of irrigation water to new services on canals would be postponed until the emergency is declared over.

Directors also authorized formation of a Drought Management Team and the contracting of support services and materials needed in the emergency.

PCWA Director of Strategic Affairs Einar Maisch said current planning is aimed at achieving a 25 percent reduction in indoor water use and 50 percent reduction in outside water use by all customers, with exceptions being studied for outdoor commercial uses.

The board is expected to review the water supply outlook again on Feb. 20, at which time more specific demand reduction measures could be enacted.

Meanwhile, officials are hoping that current wet weather patterns will continue. Deputy Director of Technical Services Tony Firenzi, the agency's Drought Project Manager, said the current storm is projected to bring 5-6 inches of precipitation to local mountain watersheds and would bring the total to about even with the 1977 drought year, the driest on record. He noted that Feb. 1 snow surveys showed just 7 percent of average water content in the local mountain snowpack.

"This looks like a good storm, but unfortunately it's not going to be enough to get us out of this situation," he said. "We'll need many more good storms to accomplish that."

In a related matter, the PCWA board approved the emergency installation of pumps and piping at two existing wells in the Rocklin area. Officials said the \$244,000 project would allow use of groundwater during the water shortage, allowing more water to be saved in upper elevation reservoirs.

Officials said the water agency is facing increased costs of dry year operation, including electrical pumping charges for backup water supplies from the American River, while facing

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revenue reductions from reduced levels of water sales. Revenue reductions were projected at \$1.5 million to \$4.2 million while increased expenses were estimated at \$1.5 million to \$4 million.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors will be held at 2 p.m. on Feb. 20 at the PCWA Business Center, 144 Ferguson Road, in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.

Information on PCWA board meetings may be obtained through the Clerk to the Board at (530) 823-4850 or (800) 464-0030. The PCWA website, www.pcwa.net now offers a Drought Update link with many water saving actions that customers can take to help do their part.