

Canal damage may force water rationing in Placer County

By Matt Weiser and Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Repairs to a Placer County water canal destroyed by a landslide could be at least a month away, water officials said, likely requiring mandatory water rationing for many customers starting next week.

A section of the Bear River Canal slid off a mountainside near Colfax on April 19. The canal, owned by Pacific Gas & Electric Co., is a crucial water source for the Placer County Water Agency, which serves 57,000 customers ranging from suburban residents in Roseville to farmers in the foothills.

The agency has been able to meet demand with other sources and stored water, avoiding harm to customers so far. But the agency's board will consider declaring a water emergency at a special meeting Tuesday.

This would result in a mandatory 25 percent water rationing order for treated water customers in the Auburn and Bowman areas, while other areas of the county would be asked to reduce outdoor water use by 10 percent on a voluntary basis and to water only on alternate days.

The cuts would be deeper for untreated irrigation water customers. Small farmers around Auburn would see a mandatory 50 percent reduction, while the cut to commercial farms and golf courses would be 25 percent.

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