

Calif. refuses to ease drought restrictions

By Kathryn Reed

In the same week that much of Northern California, including the Lake Tahoe Basin, is contending with flooding, the State Water Resources Control Board said water conservation is necessary.

South Tahoe PUD had voiced its disgust with this regulation prior to the Feb. 8 decision via a letter to the water board. General Manager Richard Solbrig told his board the district will maintain the odd-even three-day week watering days that it has imposed for 10 years. The district was way ahead of the curve in recognizing conservation is important. It's the more drastic regulations under the drought rules that STPUD has issues with.

"These regulations have helped Californians rise to the occasion and show what they can do with conservation, while providing flexibility based on differing local water supply conditions across the state," state water board Chair Felicia Marcus said. "We are beyond happy that water conditions continue to improve this year, but the rainy season isn't over yet and some areas of the state continue to suffer significant drought impacts. As glorious as the first half of the season has been, we know that weather can change quickly, and vary depending on where you are, so it is most prudent to wait a bit longer until close of the rainy season to take stock of the statewide situation and decide what to do next."

By keeping the drought measures in place it means an additional 270 days of consumption reports, "stress tests," and water-use cuts.



Flooded Tahoe meadows make drought restrictions seem ludicrous. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“This decision is blind to the plain fact seen on every mountain, river and reservoir in the north state. We are flush with water, and they know that, but this lays bare their ‘permanent drought’ plan that will let them limit and control water use forever to meet their environmentalist agenda,” state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, said in a statement. He represents the California side of the Tahoe basin. “There has been so much talk about sanctuary cities and sanctuary states lately, all relating to immigration. But now I’m convinced that California citizens need a sanctuary from unelected bureaucrats who won’t call off the drought when people are all but having to canoe to work because of the rain

Wednesday’s keep the drought rules decision was on the same day the state was trying to figure out the appropriate level of flow down the damaged spillway at Oroville Dam. What is

being called a cavity opened on the spillway on Feb. 7 from all of the water that has been released. The spillway is necessary to maintain reservoir operations. With rain in the forecast through Friday and upcoming spring runoff, that spillway is needed.

The dam is sound, and no imminent threat to the public exists, authorities said.

The statewide water savings numbers were also released Wednesday. In December, 20.6 percent less water was used compared to the base year of December 2013.

STPUD had its January numbers available last week, saying the district used 18 percent less water than January 2013.

Solbrig said since the peak water consumption year of 2007 STPUD has cut that figure by 33 percent.