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Olivenhain Municipal Water District Declares Drought Level 1 and Says No New Service Connections If It Moves To Level 2

Encinitas, CA –The Olivenhain Municipal Water District (District) Board of Directors adopted a Drought Response Conservation Ordinance (Ordinance) at its Board Meeting this morning. Immediately following the adoption of the Ordinance, the General Manager declared a Level 1 Drought Watch for the District’s service area effective immediately. The ordinance consists of four levels and is modeled after the regional drought ordinance developed in partnership with the San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) and other local water suppliers. Water suppliers throughout San Diego County have adopted or will adopt their own drought ordinances generally consistent with restrictions that are being enforced across the region.

Level 1 – “Drought Watch” effective July 23, 2008

A Level 1 condition calls out six primary use restrictions. Compliance with these restrictions during Level 1 is voluntary; however these same restrictions become mandatory and will incur penalties if the District moves to Level 2. Level 1 restrictions, which are also generally considered best water management practices, include not washing off paved surfaces, not allowing runoff from irrigation, watering before 8 AM or after 6 PM, using a shut off nozzle on hoses and repairing all leaks promptly. During a Level 1 Drought Watch condition, the District will increase its public education and outreach efforts to emphasize public awareness of the need to implement the water conservation practices adopted in the Drought Response Ordinance. At Level 1 the District is asking customers to help conservation efforts by voluntarily cutting back their water use by at least 10% within and around their homes and businesses. If 10% water reduction goals are not accomplished in Level 1, a Level 2 Drought Alert could be declared.

Level 2 - The District diverges from the Regional Ordinance to Stop New Connections Earlier at Level 2

In a Level 2 “Drought Alert” (up to 20% reduction required) all water reduction measures in Level 1 will continue; however they will become mandatory and will incur penalties. The District Board decided to diverge from the Regional Ordinance by providing that no new potable water service connections will be allowed in Level 2. “The Regional Ordinance did not call for the discontinuation of new service connections until Level 3;

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however the District felt that we owed a duty to our existing customers to take this step earlier. If we start telling our existing customers that they have mandatory restrictions and penalties, we didn't feel it was right to keep setting new meters.," stated Mark Muir, the District's Board Treasurer and the District's representative to the San Diego County Water Authority. The only exceptions for new service connections in Level 2 will be for public health and safety, previously issued and unexpired building permits, or if the developer can offset all of the water demands of the new service connection. More information and additional customer notices will be provided if and when the District moves to Level 2 or higher The District's Drought Response Ordinance may be viewed at its website www.omwd.com.

Why has the District moved to a Level 1 "Drought Watch?"

San Diego County is a semi-arid region and local water resources are scarce. The region is dependent upon imported water supplies provided by the Water Authority, which obtains a substantial portion of its supplies from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan Water District). The Water Authority is responsible for notifying its member agencies, including the District, that there will be supply shortages and that certain consumer conservation measures are needed in order to ensure that sufficient supplies will be available to meet anticipated demands. On June 4, 2008 Governor Schwarzenegger declared a statewide drought, and on June 10, 2008 in response to the Governor's proclamation, Metropolitan Water District declared a Water Supply Alert throughout its six-county service area to help preserve water storage reserves. "The plain and simple of it is that the entire state is in a drought and we are drawing down storage at an alarming rate in order to meet demands. We do not have the ability to replenish those supplies as we did in the past due to court ordered restrictions on pumping from the Delta. Unless demand is reduced voluntarily, we will be moving to the next levels in the Drought Ordinance which include mandatory compliance, penalties and allotments. " stated the District's General Manager Kimberly Thorner.

California is experiencing a drought due to two consecutive years of below-average rainfall, very low snowmelt runoff and the largest court-ordered water transfer restrictions in state history. The water transfer restrictions have been placed on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta pumps on the State Water Project pipelines that provide water to most of Southern California including San Diego County. The District receives 40% of its water supply from the State Water Project. These restrictions are from federal rulings set to protect several protected fish species in the Delta, and will prevent delivery of up to 30% of the water from the State Water Project. This restriction is anticipated to remain in effect for several years.

The Metropolitan Water District has projected that there will be shortages in our water supply from 120,000 acre feet up to 600,000 acre feet for 2009. 120,000 acre feet is roughly the amount of water for approximately 120,000 families of four for one year. Even if more rain is received and snowpack goes up next year it will not be enough to make up for the deficiencies in our water supply that already exist.

These factors have triggered the necessity for the District to adopt its drought response ordinance and declare Level 1 Drought Watch.

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What is the District doing besides asking for conservation?

The District is continuing to pursue additional recycled water delivery options in addition to already providing recycled water for homeowners associations, golf courses and other such common areas. In August of this year the District will begin delivery of recycled water to the northwest quadrant of its service area which includes portions of Carlsbad and Encinitas. The use of recycled water for irrigation purposes lessens the demand on the potable water system.

Conservation measures are important in maintaining a sustainable water supply for District customers but new water supplies are also necessary. The District has contracted for up to 5,000 acre feet of desalinated water, which equates to 10% of the District's current supply via the proposed Carlsbad desalination plant, which is anticipated to begin delivering water by 2011. Before construction of the Carlsbad desalination plant can begin, the project must gain final approval from the Coastal Commission. "The District is focusing its efforts on conservation, recycled water and desalination. As a partner with the eight other local water agencies currently contracted with Poseidon Resources to receive desalinated water from the Carlsbad Desalination Plant, we can not stress the importance of the permitting and construction of this plant enough. We need to get this desalination plant online" stated Kimberly Thorner, District General Manager. Customers can show their support for the desalination project by sending a letter or appearing at the next Coastal Commission hearing on August 6th at the Oceanside City Hall. Meetings are subject to change. Visit www.coastal.ca.gov to keep updated.

The District offers many conservation programs such as rebates for the purchase of high-efficiency toilets and clothes washers, rotating sprinkler nozzles, and FREE water use surveys to all of its customers including businesses and multi-family dwelling units. For a complete list of programs please visit www.omwd.com.

The District is a public agency providing water, wastewater services, recycled water, hydroelectricity and operation of the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. The District was organized in 1959 and has been serving water to its customers since 1961. The District currently includes over 48 square miles, and services a population of approximately 63,000 residents. The District includes portions of the cities of Encinitas, Carlsbad, San Diego, Solana Beach, and San Marcos as well as the communities of Olivenhain, Leucadia, Elfin Forest, Rancho Santa Fe, Fairbanks Ranch, Santa Fe Valley and 4S Ranch. For more information about the District visit www.omwd.com.

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