

# State still stingy on water supply

**Kerana Todorov, Napa Valley Register, 3-3-10**

Despite a rainy and snowy winter in California, the state plans to ship minimal water supplies to cities including Napa and American Canyon.

“After three years of drought conditions and a number of mandated pumping restrictions even a wet year won’t get us out of the woods,” Department of Water Resources Director Make Cowin said in a written statement. “We need increased conservation, a more reliable water delivery system and a comprehensive solution for California’s water crisis,” he added.

The state Department of Water Resources recently increased allocations for the year, but only from 5 to 15 percent of the amount of water agencies requested. If average precipitation continues, the final allocation will likely be in the 35-45 percent range, according to the department.

“(Fifteen percent) is still a very low allocation and we’re still hopeful that this number will continue to go up through March and April, especially as the wet weather continues,” said Felix Riesenber, Napa County’s deputy district engineer for the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

The agency negotiates local water contracts with that state agency.

The district will continue to try to purchase water from other agencies as long as allocations from the state water Project remain low, Riesenber said.

The city of Napa, like American Canyon, relies primarily on the State Water Project’s North Bay Aqueduct for water. The cities treat the water at plants off Jamieson Canyon Road. Napa also draws from two local reservoirs — Lake Hennessey and Lake Milliken — both of which are full this year. Lake Hennessey, the bigger reservoir, is spilling for the first time in three years.

Representatives for both cities remain optimistic about this year’s water supplies.

Lake Oroville, one of the State Water Project’s main sources in the Sierra, is only at 54 percent, according to state officials. The watershed around Lake Oroville is so parched after three years of drought that it will likely absorb much of the snowpack runoff, state officials said.

If water allocations remain at 15 percent of the requests, this will be the lowest allocation percentage in the project’s history, records show.

Joy Eldredge, the city of Napa’s general water manager, said Napa will continue to encourage the public to follow voluntary conservation measures.

In American Canyon, which has no water reservoirs, City Manager Rich Ramirez said the city will breathe easier if and when the state water allocations reach 30 percent. He said it is “too early” to decide whether to call for special conservation measures.

The city asked for voluntary water conservation measures last summer.

Michael Throne, American Canyon public works director, said the city will have a “satisfactory water year” if it is able to get 30 percent of its water allocation from the state.

The city will be in a better shape this year because it will irrigate its parks with recycled water for the first time, saving about 300 acre-feet of water a year. It will be able to buy extra state water under various programs.

“We’re pretty optimistic right now because it’s raining right now and snowing so wonderfully,” Throne said.

Upvalley, Calistoga receives 60 percent of its water supplies from the North Bay Aqueduct. Kimball Reservoir, the city’s reservoir, is full and spilling.

Still, Dan Takasugi, public works director for Calistoga, said, “It is too early to say whether conservation measures would be needed this summer.”

Yountville relies on Rector Reservoir, a lake east of the city, for water. The reservoir is full and has been overflowing for the past month, Yountville Town Manager Steve Rogers said this week.

Yountville does not have either voluntary or mandatory water conservation measures in place. Instead residents have “a graduated rate schedule where heavy users pay a higher rate for the upper tiers of water usage,” Rogers said.

A representative for St. Helena, which relies in part on Bell Reservoir and contract water from the city of Napa, could not be reached for comment.