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## ***DROUGHT UPDATE AND STORMWATER AUGMENTATION SURCHARGE***

After what was a long and relentless winter in many parts of the state, here in the San Gabriel Valley and the local watershed, rainfall was just above average. As everyone has been saying, “it will take more than one wet year to get out of this drought.” Groundwater in the Main San Gabriel Basin (Basin), is still well below normal but has seen some improvement as a result of imported supplies from the wet north.

For most of the State, the relentless and record-setting drought is over, but in parts of the state, the effects are still being felt and will likely be felt for several years to come while groundwater basins recover (a very slow process). Here in our Basin, the rainfall did little to help falling groundwater levels. The overly dry watershed sucked up nearly all the precipitation with little seen flowing into the reservoirs. However, due to the record-setting rains in the north, import water is available to maintain levels where they currently are, and possibly help to increase them a bit.

Although the drought is not over really over locally, and we have seen little to no improvement in the local groundwater, we believe the slow process of recovery has started. As a result, the Board has approved increasing the allowable watering days to four (4), with the understanding that all other prohibitions of water waste are still in effect, including the non-watering times of 7 am to 7 pm. We ask that you be diligent in your water use as we still don’t know what next year will bring, and if it is dry, we could be back to two (2) days per week. Please refer to our website, [vhwc.org](http://vhwc.org) for more details.

As noted above, the past winter did little to help with water supplies here in the Basin. It did however, do wonders for the local watershed, and your yards. What made this drought so historical? In general terms, Southern California has three (3) sources of water, the local groundwater supplies, import water from the Colorado River, and import water from the Northern California. During the past five (5) years, all three (3) sources were critically impaired. Historically, when it has been dry for a year or two in one watershed it would be wet or “normal” in another. During the past 5 years, all the watersheds were extremely dry.

As a result of the past 5 years, the possibility that this may be the new “normal,” and tremendous environmental restraints on moving water from Northern California to the south, the Main San Gabriel Watermaster (Watermaster) has adopted a plan to address the “Stormwater Shortage.” Watermaster is the court-appointed entity in charge of managing the Basin. During the past five (5) years Watermaster has taken several steps to deal with the falling ground water levels, but without Stormwater run-off from the watershed, there just has not been enough water to maintain Basin groundwater levels.

Importing water from Northern California comes with a significant cost, but when weighed against a water shortage producers within the Basin are in full support of the Watermaster plan. The plan is to buy enough import water annually to maintain Basin levels and store water for the dry years. The Cost of the water will be assessed on each producer based on their annual groundwater production. The plan will be implemented over (5) five years and will start with this current year's production, and assessed in September. As a result, the Company must start collecting these funds for payment to Watermaster.

**The cost to you the consumer will start July 1, 2017.** The Company has funds within its' "Purchased Water" budget for most of this year's assessment, due in September 2017. However, as the assessment from Watermaster ramps up next year, and the following year(s), the Board has determined the most economical way to collect the funds is to place a surcharge on each unit of water sold/used by our customers. The assessment will be accounted for annually and adjusted up or down to meet the annual September assessment from Watermaster. Therefore, **Starting July 1, there will be a \$ 0.08 per unit surcharge on each unit of water sold/used by our customers.**

The Board understands that this is, and will be, a significant charge to every consumer going forward. However, preventing the need for mandatory rationing like we have seen the past two years, also came with a cost. The Board would like to acknowledge the effort and commitment the Company saw during the last two years from all our customer to achieve the 25 percent mandatory reduction. It was extremely reassuring to have this level of participation from all. THANK YOU!

**Our ability to contact you in an EMERGENCY is critical.  
Please take a minute and follow us on Twitter @valenciaheights**

**Watch for an EMERGENCY contact card enclosed in your water bill.  
Please fill this out and return this card to the office.**

**We can't help you if you don't help us.**

**Thank you,  
Valencia Heights Water Company**