

**Headline: Forced water conservation could follow dry winter**

**Publication: San Francisco Chronicle**

**Byline: Jonathan Curiel**

**Date: September 5, 2007**

A federal judge's ruling that limits the amount of water that can be pumped out of the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta increases the likelihood of rationing in much of the Bay Area if the coming winter is as dry as the last one, water officials said Tuesday.

Agencies that supply water to millions of customers in Santa Clara County, the Livermore area and other places dependent on the delta described Friday's court decision as the back half of a double whammy that started with last winter's skimpy storm totals.

"We are looking at the potential for mandatory conservation, but we're not going to know until we get into late January or early February," said Susan Siravo, a spokeswoman for the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which serves 1.7 million residents and gets half its water from the delta. "Here in Silicon Valley, people don't connect the delta to the Bay Area. They think, 'What does that have to do with me?' But it does."

Friday's ruling by U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger will cut the amount of water pumped from the delta to cities, counties and farms around the state. Wanger's decision is designed to protect delta smelt, a small fish whose spawning has been disrupted by delta water pumps operated by the State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project.

The ruling will restrict delta water flows from late December through June, a six-month period when the smelt spawn.

The decision, which will be in effect for at least a year, could lead to a cutback of as much as 35 percent of the water pumped from the delta for people and farms, say officials from the state Department of Water Resources.

"We're not yet talking about rationing, but down the line, we don't know," said Boni Brewer, spokeswoman with the Zone 7 Water Agency, which gets 80 percent of its water from the delta and serves about 200,000 customers in Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin. "We will be asking people to help us not draw down on our reserves as quickly by conserving water."

Calls for voluntary conservation began in April around the Bay Area, not just in districts that rely on delta water. In San Francisco, which gets its water from the Hetch Hetchy system, water usage has dropped 12 percent over last year, the city's Public Utilities Commission says.

The Alameda County Water District, which serves Fremont, Newark and Union City, gets 40 percent of its water from the delta. Karl Stinson, the district's operations manager, cautioned that, "We start at voluntary levels (of conservation). Then, if conditions get worse enough, we'd have to resort to mandatory conservation."

Wanger's ruling doesn't affect customers of the Hetch Hetchy system, which serves 2.6 million people in San Francisco, the East Bay and the Peninsula. Also unaffected are the East Bay Municipal Utility District, Marin Municipal Water District and Sonoma County Water Agency, all of which get their supplies either from local sources or the Sierra.

All those agencies, however, have joined in the campaign urging people to curtail their use of water.

### **Tips for conserving water**

**Lawns:** Water between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

**Yards:** Don't water more than three days a week or on consecutive days.

**Laundry:** Put full loads into front-loading machines.

**Leaks:** Find and repair, particularly in toilets.

**Driveways:** Use a broom, not a hose, to clean them.

**Cars:** Use a bucket and a hose with shutoff nozzle to wash cars, or go to a car wash that recycles and reuses water.

**Pools:** Cover pools and hot tubs when not in use.

**Bathrooms:** Turn the water off when brushing your teeth or soaping up in a shower. Take shorter showers. Don't flush the toilet unnecessarily.

**Cooking:** Defrost food in the microwave or refrigerator instead of using running water.