



Drought expands grip on California

Wholesalers likely to limit water they provide to retail agencies

If you moved to California for warmth and sunshine, this is as good as it gets: 2012 to 2014 were the driest three years in California's history; 2014 was the warmest year on record and 2015 began with the warmest winter on record.

All of this sunshine, however, comes at a high cost.

In late February, state water officials announced that they were preparing for a fourth consecutive year of drought.

A week later, they announced that the water contained in the Sierra snowpack was

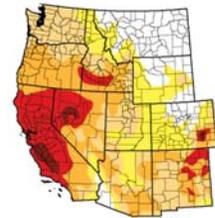
just 19 percent of the historical average for the date.

In normal years, the Sierra snowpack supplies almost one third of California's water.

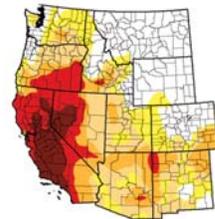
The State Water Resources Control Board is expected to extend the "state of emergency" issued by the governor in 2014 and mandate additional, statewide restrictions on landscape irrigation.



Save every day, every way.



2014



2015

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Treatment plant hits half-century mark

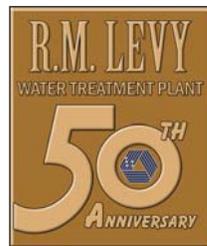
Facility celebrates 50 years of service to district customers

Helix Water District's R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant is celebrating its 50th year in operation.

With construction completed in 1965 on a clearing in Lakeside, the plant had modest beginnings, with a capability of processing 53 million gallons of water per day, using just six filters and two mixing basins.

Today, after several upgrades, the plant has a capacity of 106 MGD and serves 268,000 customers in La Mesa, El Cajon, Lemon Grove and parts of Spring Valley and Lakeside.

The plant also treats water for neighboring water agencies. The additional production enhances the quality and reliability of the east



county water supply.

The most significant of the plant's advancements may be its conversion in 2002 from chlorine treatment to ozonation, a process that makes what many people say is a far better tasting water while creating fewer byproducts.

The Helix plant was the first in San Diego County to use ozonation for water treatment.

Having its own treatment plant allows the district to treat much less expensive water from the local watershed and pass the savings to its ratepayers. 💧

Helix Water District's R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeside is turning 50. It has been upgraded over the years and now boasts a capacity to treat up to 106 million gallons per day.



Sophia Bacting photo

How can you help deal with drought

● Turn off irrigation

If rain is forecasted, turn off your irrigation system the day before. Don't turn it back on again until your rain-soaked soil begins to dry out.

● Program your irrigation controller each month

If you don't have a "smart" controller that adjusts automatically, enter your information into an online calculator to get a watering schedule for your controller. Here's one: apps.sandiego.gov/landcalc/.

● Put shrubs and perennials on drip irrigation

Plants absorb water through their roots, not their leaves. Replace sprinkler heads in planters with drip irrigation.

● Take water-efficient landscaping classes

Listen to an expert, ask questions and give it a try. Many classes are offered at the Water Conservation Garden, 12122 Cuyamaca College Dr. West, El Cajon, CA
☎ (619) 660-0614
www.thegarden.org

Drought expands its grip...

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In addition, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is expected to limit water deliveries to its member agencies, including the San Diego County Water Authority, which supplies water to Helix Water District.

Metropolitan delivers approximately 4 million acre-feet of water annually, but only has 1.2 million acre feet of water stored in reservoirs.

In a normal year, melting snow in the Sierra and the Colorado River watershed would provide the additional water.



The cause of California's extended drought is a ridge of high pressure that is deflecting winter storms bound for California north to Alaska.

The ridge appeared in 2012, remained in place through spring 2014, and formed again in 2015.

"At its peak in January 2014, the ridge extended from the subtropical Pacific between California and Hawaii to the coast of the Arctic Ocean north of Alaska," said Daniel Swain, a member of a research team at Stanford University led by climate scientist Noah Diffenbaugh. 💧

District pursues hi-tech upgrade

A major technological overhaul is taking place at Helix Water District with the installation and implementation of computer hardware and software programs that will bolster the agency's efficiency in three specific areas.

The move ultimately will benefit the water purveyor's 268,000 customers in several ways.

The district has contracted with XC2 Software, LLC; Cayenta, a division of N. Harris Computer Corporation; and KeyMark, Inc., to design, install and/or implement the advanced equipment and programs. The projects will automate repetitive tasks, digitize paper-based processes, administer an upgraded backflow prevention program, streamline record-keeping and modernize customer account information handling.

"Our goal is to adopt long-term, sustainable and cost-effective systems that support our core business functions," said Carlos Lugo, Helix's general manager. "That will allow us to better adapt to our customers' needs."



Backflow device

The district has installed XC2, a software package for the administration of backflow prevention and cross-connection control systems. The increased efficiency from the upgrade will help protect drinking water systems from contamination.

Mark Umphres, Helix's director of water quality and system operations, said increased installation of backflow devices on private systems in the district's service area has made it essential to upgrade the current program. There are currently 3,750 backflow devices throughout the district.

"This upgrade has become especially important over the past three years as the district has doubled the number of backflow prevention devices that are certified and tracked," he said.

"This new technology allows for quick and accurate reports on program targets and goals," said Larry Lyford, manager of Helix's R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant. "Customers and their approved testing companies eventually will be able to fill out test forms online and staff can verify compliance with testing requirements much easier than previous software allowed. The end result is improved efficiency."

Darrin Teisher, Helix's cross-connection

See "Hi-tech upgrade..." on page 4

Got a beautiful, water-wise yard?

Contest judges could reward your landscaping excellence

As San Diegans continue to find new ways to conserve water during California's unprecedented drought situation, the time is ripe for residents to showcase their water-wise landscaping success stories by entering Helix Water District's California-Friendly Landscape Contest.

As much as 50 percent of a residential homeowner's water use is for outdoor irrigation.

Now is the perfect time for homeowners who have already taken this important step toward conservation to show the community what they can do.

One of these options is moving from traditional grass lawns and/or landscaping to California-friendly plants that require far less water. Check for helpful rebates on turf removal, irrigation devices and more at:



The district's annual landscape contest recognizes a resident whose yard displays the great beauty and water-use efficiency of drought-tolerant plants.

<http://hwd.com/conserves/rebates.pdf>

Judges will look for overall attractiveness (curb appeal), pertinent plant selection, evidence of appropriate maintenance, efficient methods of irrigation and demonstrated water savings.

Deadline to enter is April 10. Download a contest entry form and get competition details at: <http://www.landscapecontest.com> 



Why Enter?

Winner takes home a \$250 gift certificate from a local nursery.

Attend a free class on water-efficient gardening



1. Use a holistic approach to gardening
2. Build a living soil sponge
3. Rethink elements of your site
4. Right plant, right place
5. Use rainwater as a resource
6. Manage irrigation

LEARN 6 WAYS
TO MAKE YOUR
GARDEN
CALIFORNIA
FRIENDLY.



Interested in becoming a more water-wise gardener? Helix Water District will be hosting a California-friendly landscape class this spring.

The free class is sponsored by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Attend this three-hour workshop and learn six ways to make your residential garden California-friendly.

The class will be held from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 18, at Helix Water District's operations center at 1233 Vernon Way in El Cajon.

Space is limited, so preregistration is required.

To register, email rsvp@helixwater.org or call (619) 667-1711.

Please include your name, phone number, the date of the class you will be attending and the number of attendees.

If you are unable to attend the class hosted at Helix, additional sessions are being offered throughout San Diego County.

For a list of all dates and locations, visit: <http://www.watersmartsd.org/programs/california-friendly-landscape-training-classes> 



More Help

Online Garden Classes
bewaterwise.com

Rebates for Devices
socialwatersmart.com/

Free Landscape Plans
hwd.com/news/landscapeplans.htm

Tutorial Videos
cuwcc.org/Resources/Video-Library

Programs & Incentives
www.watersmartsd.org/programs

Hi-tech upgrade happening at Helix

Hardware, software upgrades set to improve efficiency, benefit customers

Continued from page 2

control coordinator, had a chance to test and review the program at other agencies before making his recommendation.

"I have a large number of industry contacts that I work with frequently," he said. "We had the opportunity to see demonstrations, ask questions and look at the different backflow data management system programs that were out there. XC2 was clearly an industry favorite with great reviews and it met our program criteria."

Teisher said the system will result in a boost to employee efficiency and assist customers and their representatives who test devices in the field.

"One of the most advanced features of the XC2 program is the capability to support web-based data entry," he said. "This will allow individual backflow testers to submit and enter their customers' test reports online instead of mailing, faxing or emailing. Hopefully, this will be how backflow data are entered in the future, relieving Helix staff of time-consuming data entry and allowing more time for higher priority issues."

Melissa Watt, a Helix administrative assistant, was a key player in implementing XC2 at the district's water treatment plant.

"We tried to anticipate as much as we could and do as much data cleanup as possible to make a smooth conversion from our old paper-based system," she said. "It was a bit challenging at times, since we were learning the new program as we went along, but Helix project co-managers Tina Jenkins and Quince Lunde were instrumental in helping us through it."

Cayenta Utilities is a customer information service application that automates repetitive tasks, digitizes paper-based processes and improves revenue streams. It will enable the



district to manage customer information, schedule service orders, create payment schedules, view payment histories and active connections, and more. The implementation is expected to take approximately 18 months and should be up and running by November.

"Staff will have the ability to readily view more information and have it available at their

fingertips to serve our customers," said Brian Lawler, Helix's customer service manager. "The ability to automatically create and mail a letter or email or text information to customers will save time, improve customer communication, and allow staff to focus on other

services. Also, a website portal will provide our customers access to more information than ever before."

Project managers said Cayenta was selected for Helix based on its success elsewhere.

District staff interviewed more than 40 public agencies across the country to see the software programs they were using and learn from their experience implementing those systems. They said this approach has made them feel better prepared to anticipate issues and mitigate risks.

The OnBase enterprise content management system being implemented by KeyMark includes tools to capture, manage, store, preserve and deliver information supporting key processes through their entire lifecycles. ECMS provides scanning, document/records management and workflow automation applications and capabilities.

"As we moved forward with new technology to support the business requirements of the district, we saw the opportunity to more effectively manage the important documents of the district," said Lisa Stoia, Helix's director of administrative services. "With the district's goal of transparent government, including allowing public access to most documents, an ECMS will facilitate this goal." 💧

DIRECTORY

DeAna R. Verbeke
President
Director, Division 2
(619) 667-6232

Charles W. Muse
Vice President
Director, Division 3
(619) 667-6232

Kathleen Coates Hedberg
Director, Division 4
(619) 667-6232

John B. Linden
Director, Division 1
(619) 667-6232

Joel A. Scalzitti
Director, Division 5
(619) 667-6232

Carlos V. Lugo
General Manager
(619) 667-6241

Ted Salois
Highlights Editor
(619) 667-6257

Administration Office
7811 University Ave.
La Mesa, CA 91942
(619) 466-0585

Nat L. Eggert
Operations Center
1233 Vernon Way
El Cajon, CA 92020
(619) 596-3860

R.M. Levy
Water Treatment Plant
9550 Lake Jennings Park Rd. (NO
MAIL) Lakeside, CA 92040
(619) 443-1031

After-Hours Emergency:
(619) 466-3234

www.hwd.com



Helix Highlights is published three times each year. Helix Water District is a public agency governed by a board of directors elected to four-year terms by registered voters in the divisions in which they live. The board meets the first and third Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. and the fourth Wednesday at 3 p.m. at 7811 University Ave., La Mesa, Calif.