

JP
FERC 2130

Jeffrey Parks
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Quality Certification Program
PO Box 2000
Sacramento, Ca. 95812-2000

April 2, 2015

STATE WATER RIGHTS
DIVISION
SACRAMENTO

2015 APR -6 AM 10:59

STATE WATER RESOURCES
CONTROL BOARD

Subject: Pinecrest Lake level Modification Program

Dear Mr. Parks,

March Madness is well upon us. It is not the NCAA Basketball playoffs, but the madness of the Tuolumne Utility District, known as TUD.

On **March 13, 2015**, TUD reported (**Union Democrat**) that **they would have enough water for all of its customers, as well as enough water for all new proposed developments** now on the books. This would include:

- **The Yosemite National Golf & Wetland Preserve, a \$100 million dollar golf, hotel, & condominium resort** at Yosemite Junction, at Highway 120 & Highway 108,
 - **Oakview Estates, a 123 home residential project,**
 - **Mountain Springs, more than 800 residential homes.**
- (see enclosed)

On **March 18, 2015** TUD stated publicly, as reported on **MyMotherlode.com news service**, that both Pinecrest Lake and Lyons Reservoir were **expected to “fill and spill!”** (see enclosed)

On **March 25, 2015**, (**Union Democrat**) PG&E stated that Pinecrest Lake will only reach 5,602 feet above sea level by April or May, and **will not “fill & spill.”** (see enclosed)

On **March 26, 2015**, (**Union Democrat**) PG&E notified TUD of the dire water conditions at Pinecrest Lake. (see enclosed)

I am quite sure that the water level will drop below 5,600 feet during the summer months due to evaporation and normal water releases into the South Fork of the Stanislaus River. The current projected levels reported in the application for certification by the State Water Resources Board and the California Environmental Quality Act, are now null and void. New lake

water levels must now be incorporated into PG&E's Lake Level Modification Project to meet both your requirements and CEQUA's standards.

It was abject lunacy for water Hydrologists from either PG&E or TUD to project that **Pinecrest & Lyons reservoir would "fill & spill,"** given the serious nature of the drought.

Did they forget to check the snow surveys taken this winter on the South Fork of the Stanislaus watershed above Pinecrest Lake? Citizens of this county know all too well that this has been an extremely dry year!

TUD had ample opportunities to enlarge Lyons Reservoir in the late 1980's. This would have allowed for 2 plus years of water storage with conservation. They also had plans to pipe the open ditch system, which delivers our water and was built by gold miners in the mid 1800's. By doing so they would prevent loss by both evaporation and leakage. TUD chose not to do either project thinking, falsely, that that they would always have sufficient water storage capacity. In the meantime our population has doubled, and they keep approving new building projects.

I do not know if any more water will be allowed from Pinecrest Lake. ***If more water is allowed for TUD, then it must be stipulated that it will be used for current water customers only, and not for new developments!***

Please explain how TUD is going to meet our Governor's 25% cut in water usage, if they approve **"thousands of additional hookups?" (Union Democrat, 3/13/15)** You may need to come up here to see for yourself.


March Madness is marching right into April!

Sincerely,



Triant Varellas
PO Box 386
Soulsbyville, CA. 95372

Cc: Governor J. Brown



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TUOLUMNE UTILITIES DISTRICT

H₂O Outlook worse than thought

By GUY McCARTHY
The Union Democrat

Tuolumne Utilities District, District General Manager reluctant this year to impose the early and stiff water conservation measures implemented last year, learned this

week that the county's water situation is more dire than expected.

Tom Seesa at a Wednesday evening TUD board meeting said he learned this week from Pacific Gas and Elec-

tric Co. that Pinecrest Reservoir — TUD's second-largest source of drinking and farm water — is not supposed to fill this year, as earlier forecast.

It would be the first time since at least 1969 that the lake didn't fill, putting the dis-

trict, formed just two decades ago, in unknown territory.

Seesa said he learned only Monday from PG&E officials that Pinecrest is now forecast to peak about 75 percent of capacity this summer, the result of the historic drought.

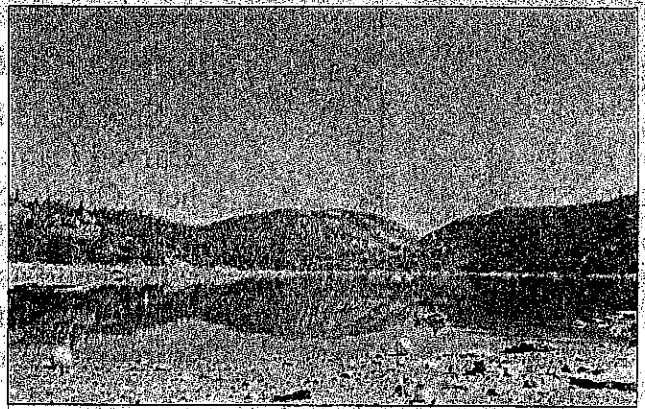
The snowpack in the watershed that would normally fill Pinecrest in spring and summer is just 10 percent of average.

PG&E owns Pinecrest and

See TUD/Back Page

Meeting set

TUD General Manager Tom Scesa will give a presentation on the district's water outlook today at a Tuolumne County Water Policy Advisory Committee meeting. The meeting, open to the public, is scheduled for 2 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors chambers in the County Administration Building, 2 S. Green St., Sonora.



Jesse Jones / Union Democrat

Water levels at Pinecrest Reservoir are lower than normal because of California's four-year drought.

TUD

Continued from Page A1

downstream Lyons Reservoir and operates them for hydroelectric power generation. TUD gets the water for consumption under a contract with the San Francisco-based company.

Lyons was holding more than 4,000 acre-feet as of Wednesday, 63 percent of its capacity.

The Pinecrest shortfall, however, is likely to spur water conservation measures by the district this year. However, Scesa said TUD will likely wait until May to impose them.

He said the district is still in better shape than last year because PG&E and TUD held back more water in Pinecrest and Lyons last fall. District customers also managed to cut usage by 32 percent in 2014 compared with 2013, according to TUD staff.

"Obviously, we need to start moving into action as we did last year," Scesa said. "Even with Pinecrest not filling, with water we've held back in Pinecrest and Lyons we should have adequate supply to get us through the calendar year. We anticipate in May bringing new steps in conservation," he said.

Nonetheless, former TUD board member Ruanne Mik-

kelsen, Stephanie Suess, of the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, and John Buckley, of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center in Twain Harte, urged Scesa and the current board to emphasize conservation messages to the district's 44,000 residents sooner.

Another former TUD board member, Glenn Carroll, challenged an earlier assertion by Scesa that TUD could have enough water in Pinecrest and Lyons in the future to serve additional hookups.

"Do we have a surplus for new development?" Carroll asked.

Scesa answered, "We've been making the assumption that Pinecrest will fill and spill. I'm not sure what we have water for."

Because of the Pinecrest shortfall, the district and PG&E will likely be back before state water officials to seek an exemption from rules that require Pinecrest's water level be held at 5,608 feet above sea level until Labor Day. This is to provide recreational opportunities at the lake, popular with boaters, anglers, and swimmers.

"Normally, Pinecrest is at 5,610 feet come Labor Day. However, due to a multiyear drought, a very dry March and very little snowpack to recharge, we anticipate a

maximum elevation of 5,602 feet by April or May of this year," PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Ehlers said. "We will be working with the U.S. Forest Service and the State Water Resources Control Board to manage Pinecrest Lake levels throughout the summer."

"PG&E is working hard to conserve water in our reservoirs so that hydropower will be available during the peak demands of summer, and as much as possible will be available for environmental considerations and for agriculture and drinking water. We're strategically generating less hydropower now so we can save it for generating power and other considerations this summer."

District Engineer Glen Nunnelley tried to be hopeful when he said forecasts for the remainder of this spring and early summer could be wrong — that more rain or snow could still fall in the watersheds TUD relies on.

However, he acknowledged the outlook as of Wednesday was not promising.

"This casts us into uncertainty," Nunnelley said. "We're really off the chart."

Contact Guy McCarthy at gmccarthy@uniondemocrat.com or 588-4547.

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News

1

Scesa: There's water enough for connections

By [Guy McCarthy, The Union Democrat](#) March 13, 2015 02:47 pm

Tuolumne County has several housing and commercial developments in the pipeline, and many residents question whether the county's largest water purveyor can meet these added demands.

According to Tuolumne Utilities District General Manager Tom Scesa, the district, which already serves 44,000 residents, can.

The key, he said, is freeing up water stored behind Pinecrest Dam. State regulations in effect since 2008 require the lake be kept mostly full through the end of summer.

"There's a regulatory drought because we have enough water, but the state will not allow us to access it," Scesa said at a TUD committee meeting Thursday.

Scesa said Pinecrest's storage is great enough for hundreds and perhaps thousands of additional hookups.

This is so, even in a record drought year like this year, he said.

He said the lake's owner, Pacific Gas and Electric Co., has asked the state to lower its lake level requirement in drought years to 5,600 feet above sea level. In average to wet years, PG&E wants to move the lake-level requirement to 5,606.

A California Environmental Quality Act study on the Pinecrest Lake level is due to be released this week, Scesa said.

The law now requires the lake to be maintained at an elevation of 5,608 feet through Labor Day, for recreational purposes.

While a 2- to 8-foot difference may seem insignificant, Scesa said each foot of elevation equals 250 to 300

acre-feet of volume, enough for 1,000 homes a year.

That water could be applied to developments now on the books, he said.

Those include:

- the Yosemite National Golf & Wetland Preserve, a \$100 million proposed golf, hotel and condo resort at Yosemite Junction southwest of Jamestown
- Oak View Estates, with 123 residential lots on 126 acres near Soulsbyville.
- Mountain Springs, the long-proposed planned community for more than 800 residential units on 1,100 acres south of Sonora.

Dropping the lake level to accommodate more connections would not come without opposition.

Pinecrest residents, boaters and others who use the lake for recreation have complained in the past about emergency suspensions of the lake-level requirements.

Too, many current TUD customers argue water-conservation measures required last year prove the system is already strapped.

"I find it hard to swallow that we have the water but we have to cut back," former TUD board member Glen Carroll told Scesa and the district's water committee. "What aggravates it, you're approving new developments or you're going to."

"They asked me to cut back 50 percent and I did," Claudia Gwinn of Sonora, a TUD customer who wrote a letter to the district board of directors in January, said in a phone interview Thursday. "Now they have enough water to talk about new subdivisions. There's not enough for existing customers. How can there be enough for more new customers?"

Developers, though, say new connections are possible and needed.

General contractor Evan Royce, elected supervisor for Tuolumne County District 3, said TUD should keep its options open.

"The most important thing is our residents here in the county have enough water for domestic uses," Royce said.

"But if you look at Tuolumne County history over the past century, there's been a lack of leadership and planning in terms of securing water rights and adequate water storage," Royce said.

Developer Troy Claveran said he's been studying water and other factors related to Yosemite National Golf & Wetland Preserve for more than a decade.

He's not certain if TUD's water supply will be able to support his project, but he's paying a consultant to find out if other options, like wells, could support it.

"I've done lots of homework over the last 15 years, not only water but the biological and the traffic," Claveran said in a phone interview. "We've done a lot of research and hired engineers for well-testing at

our site. We have quite a bit of water available to us.”

He said the resort’s developers paid for a water supply assessment in 2009 which showed there is sufficient water for the project.

He said the developers and TUD have gone back to study water options in light of the drought.

“I believe that report will be complete in two to three weeks. As far as water availability today I couldn’t say. The report’s going to say that.”

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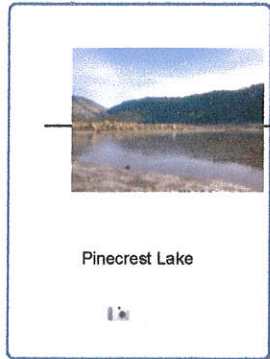


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Water Districts Dealing With Drought



Pinecrest Lake

03/18/2015 11:54 am

PST (<http://www.mymotherlode.com/news/local/236412/water-districts-dealing-with-drought.html>)

B.J. Hansen, MML News Director

Sonora, CA — Despite the fourth year of drought, the water supply for the Tuolumne Utilities District is looking much better than this time a year ago.

Pinecrest Lake is currently holding 10,200 acre ft. of water, and full capacity is 18,300 acre ft. Lyons Reservoir has 3,800 acre ft. presently, and capacity is 5,500 acre ft. T.U.D. General Manager Tom Scesa said, "PG&E continues to predict that both Pinecrest and Lyons will 'fill and spill.' With those reservoirs filling and spilling, that's adequate supply for our community, with reasonable conservation measures."

The Governor is calling for voluntary conservation of 20%, and Scesa indicated that T.U.D. will likely put in place conservation measures in April, at similar levels that the Governor is requesting.

It's not quite as rosy for the Lake Don Pedro Community Services District. General Manager Pete Kampa said the primary water source, Lake McClure, is only at 7% capacity. As it stands right now, there is enough supply in the lake to supply customers through mid-August.

As reported previously, this is why the district has now implemented mandatory 50% conservation measures and placed a ban on outside irrigation. In addition, the district has been working to drill additional wells, with help from state grant funding, and looking at other emergency measures.

The District is also hoping that higher level water officials will rethink planned water releases that are scheduled to pick up in April, primarily to help fish species.

The County Supervisors voted this week to extend the local state of emergency declaration related to the drought.

Written by [BJ Hansen](mailto:bjhansen@clarkebroadcasting.com)

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Water Districts Dealing With Drought



Pinecrest Lake

Photo by Kraig Sederquist

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News

2

PG&E: Water outlook bleaker

By [Union Democrat staff](#) March 25, 2015 06:26 pm

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. is now saying that Pinecrest Reservoir is not expected to fill with water this spring.

PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Ehlers said the roughly 18,000 acre-foot reservoir that holds water for Tuolumne Utilities District, which serves roughly 44,000 Tuolumne County residents, is only expected to reach up to 5,602 feet above sea level by April or May.

The new estimate contradicts earlier predictions that Pinecrest would both fill and spill this spring.

Ehlers noted that Pinecrest typically reaches maximum capacity at roughly 5,610 acre-feet above sea level prior to Labor Day each year. The level its expected to reach this year would be about 75 percent of total capacity.

The TUD Board of Directors was scheduled to discuss the water-supply outlook at a meeting tonight.

Look for a full report from the meeting in Thursday's edition of The Union Democrat.

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