



## Recent Storms Don't Spell End to Water Conservation

By

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For many months, California's water shortage has been front-page news. Three weeks ago, Sacramento passed truly historic legislation to address problems with the state's water system. And just this week, we've finally seen the rain we've so desperately needed. So, does this mean our water problems are over? Will Moulton Niguel and other water agencies relax about conservation?

Simply put, no. Here's why.

First, MNWD's water supply does not come from local rain or groundwater. It comes from the Colorado River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which are fed by melting snow in the Rocky and Sierra Nevada mountains. Both sources received good amounts of precipitation from these storms, but that comes on the heels of 10 years of below average rainfall in the Upper Colorado River Basin and three years of drought in the Sierras. The storms we just experienced may be the beginning of a recovery from the drought, but we will need a lot more sustained wet weather to refill our "water bank account."

Secondly, wise water use is important because South Orange County relies almost exclusively on water delivered from other parts of the state. In the event of an emergency interruption of this "imported" water, Moulton Niguel must rely on water stored in local reservoirs to meet our customers' needs. The District is currently working on several projects to dramatically improve local storage and reliability, and has adopted a policy of developing local supplies and storage to withstand an imported-water outage of up to 31 days. In the meantime, though, being as efficient as possible remains necessary.

Finally, the problem with the state's water system is not just the drought. Environmental issues in the Delta play a large role as well. All of the water Southern California imports from Northern California must pass through the Delta, so even if there is deep snow in the Sierras, Southern California will not benefit unless the water can be moved through and out of the Delta. A federal court order aimed at protecting the endangered delta smelt, a small fish, has seriously limited the state's ability to do just that. The recent legislation confirms "co-equal" goals of restoring the Delta ecosystem, including the endangered fish, and providing for the state's water needs. That's what makes the recent legislative package so historic, but a real fix still will take 20 years or more and is

completely dependent on passage of a bond to finance the proposed Delta improvements, which will appear on the November 2010 ballot.

Our customers have done a great job using less water, but the fact remains that MNWD must continue to meet our customers' needs with reduced supplies, and the need for all of us to be more water wise will not go away. Also, the legislation included a requirement for a 20 percent reduction in water use by 2020. We are working to see that our community gets credit for the huge investments we have made in water conservation and water recycling, but even so, we will need to continue being as efficient as possible.

What can you do? Be more aware of your water use. Continue to take steps to become more efficient. Learn about the Delta and why fixing it is so important to all of us. And please, don't assume that this week's storms mean our problems are solved.

More information and water-saving tips can be found at [www.mnwd.com](http://www.mnwd.com).

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