

Irvine Ranch Water District Pipelines

The Newsletter of Irvine Ranch Water District / September 2005
Volume 2005 Number 9

Free Water Awareness Tours

Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) offers free Water Awareness Tours to all its customers.

The Fall tours will be held on Friday and Saturday, October 7 and 8.

These tours, open to those who live or work with IRWD boundaries, are an excellent opportunity to gain valuable information about the water system, wastewater treatment, and recycled water use.

The free tours start promptly at 8 a.m. and conclude at approximately 2 p.m. Lunch is provided. The tours fill very quickly and are first-come first-served based on the date we receive your reservation. You will receive a call if your selection is not available. We are unable to accommodate children under 16 years of age.

Customers may register on the IRWD Web site at www.irwd.com or call (949) 453-5500.

STATE TAKES IRWD PROPERTY TAXES

As you well know, property owners in Orange County pay billions of dollars in basic property taxes each year. These tax revenues are allocated according to a complex formula among local governments and special districts such as IRWD.

While property taxes are assessed, levied, collected and distributed at the local level, in 1978 Proposition 13 made the state the final arbiter in deciding who receives basic property tax monies and how much they receive. Proposition 13 also set the maximum basic tax rate at 1% of assessed property value per year. Thus, it is commonly referred to as the "1% property tax."

How IRWD Uses 1% Property Taxes

IRWD maintains over 1,000 miles of drinking water pipelines, over 300 miles of recycled water pipelines, over 600 miles of sewer pipes, 40 reservoirs and two large wastewater treatment plants. Without these facilities, water could not be supplied or delivered and sewage could not be collected and treated.

IRWD finances facilities needed to provide water and sewer service to our growing customer base by issuing general obligation bonds, much like you finance your home with a mortgage from the bank. IRWD uses the 1% property taxes received from the state to make payments on these bonds. This makes sense - IRWD facilities are paid for by a tax on the property that directly benefits from the service we provide.

State Takes IRWD 1% Property Taxes

In early 2004 we warned you of a possible attempt by the state to change this formula that might result in the elimination or a big reduction in the portion of the 1% property taxes IRWD and many other special districts receive from the state. Unfortunately, this prediction came true. In late 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger asked local governments to help solve the state budget crisis by transferring \$1.3 billion in property taxes to the state budget for the next two years. As part of this action special districts statewide lost \$350 million a year in local property taxes, with cities and counties making up the difference. In Orange County alone

continued on page two...

FREE Fall Residential Landscape Workshop



WHEN:
Friday, October 28
6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

WHERE:
IRWD Headquarters
15600 Sand Canyon Avenue
Irvine CA, 92618

Fall 2005 brings a new, fun workshop format which features both fact-filled talks and hands-on demonstrations by local irrigation, gardening and landscape specialists. Workshop topics may include:

- How to water for plant health and low water bills
- Irrigation system basics
- Landscape design basics
- How to prepare soil for greater plant success

Limited seating. Reserve your seat(s) online at <http://www.irwd.com/FreePrograms/workshops.php>

If you do not have internet access, please call 949-453-5327 to make your reservation.

continued from page one...

STATE TAKES IRWD PROPERTY TAXES

over \$59 million was lost.

Early estimates by the California Legislature indicated that an enterprise special district such as IRWD could expect to lose approximately 40% of their property taxes for two years. However during the legislative session, legislators granted special exemptions to fire districts, mosquito abatement districts and transit districts. Enterprise special districts - those that have the ability to charge their customers for service - were required to make up the property taxes lost by these special exemptions. The result was that IRWD lost much more property taxes than the original 40% estimate.

How much did IRWD lose?

IRWD currently receives approximately \$13.5 million in 1% property taxes a year from the state, all of which goes to meet debt service for general obligation bonds issued to fund water and sewer infrastructure. For IRWD the state property tax shift translates into a loss of almost 70%, or approximately \$10 million dollars a year for a total of over \$20 million dollars over the next two years.

IRWD Gets a Double Hit

To make matters worse, IRWD was not the only local agency to lose property tax money to the state. In Orange County, the Orange County Water District manages the groundwater basin. Drinking water pumped by IRWD from local wells is assessed a replenishment fee by OCWD. These fees are incorporated into the rates paid by IRWD customers. As an enterprise special district, the Orange County Water District also lost a significant portion of their property taxes, over \$7 million, to the state for the next two years. This loss in funds will be recouped by charging their customers, such as IRWD, a special assessment on the water basin replenishment fee.

Impact on IRWD Customers

The two-year \$20 million shift of the District's current 1% property tax distribution will be offset by 1) raising other IRWD taxes assessed to property owners in the District by approximately \$.02 per hundred dollars of assessed value (land only) and 2) raising the fees charged for new service connections by approximately 23.5% overall. For example, a median cost home in Orange County valued at \$600,000 can expect an increase in taxes of approximately \$66 a year.

Over the coming years IRWD customers will continue to pay the same 1% property taxes to the state plus the additional IRWD imposed taxes and fees needed to pay our infrastructure bond payments. In the end, this was roundabout way for the state to quietly raise taxes by forcing IRWD to increase fees and assessments to offset 1% property tax revenues taken by the state.

It's unclear why the true impact of the local government property tax shift was never made public during the lengthy legislative hearings in Sacramento. What is clear is that consequences of this shift are much more dramatic and far-reaching than was ever discussed during the state budget negotiations. Because of the continuing fiscal crisis in Sacramento, we do not expect this shift to end after the two year time period.

IRWD is a non-profit public agency, so we budget to break even every year. Our annual operations costs are funded through the monthly bills paid by our customers and our annual infrastructure bond payments are funded from the basic 1% property taxes we receive each year.

Urban Water Management Plan

Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) is currently updating the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) to be submitted to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) by December 31, 2005. The UWMP serves as a long-range planning document for water supply and demand and provides an overview of IRWD's water supply and usage, recycled water and conservation programs. In accordance with the California Urban Water Management Planning Act, all California agencies providing water to more than 3,000 customers or more than 3,000 acre-feet of water per year are required to update their Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) every five years and submit them to the Department of Water Resources.

Customers interested in reviewing the 2000 plan may do so on IRWD's Web site at www.irwd.com. Copies are also available for review at IRWD's headquarters located at 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, 92618.

A draft of the 2005 update will be available for review on IRWD's Web site (www.irwd.com) or at IRWD's headquarters in October 2005. A 30-day public comment period will follow and a public hearing will be held in November 2005 prior to the adoption of the plan.

You may submit comments or questions to Kelly Welch at welch@irwd.com, (949) 453-5604, IRWD, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, 92618.

Water Conservation Tips



- **Start cutting back on your watering.** By the end of September, plants will need as much as one-third LESS water than they did in August, even though the days are still warm. Why? Because the days are shorter, so plants do not lose as much water during the day as they did in mid-summer. Also, plants are slowing their growth rate-the opposite of the spring growth phase. Watch for signs of stress. Lawns show stress when grass blades turn wiry and don't pop back up when stepped on. Plants and bushes show stress when leaves droop or start to turn color. Domestic plants will easily recover from minor stress. If runoff occurs, reduce the watering time, but water twice in the same day at least an hour apart. Shrubs and trees will need about half of what turf requires.
- **Brown grass.** Warm season grasses go into dormancy and turn brown this time of year. No amount of water will change that! Some landscapers will "overseed" with an annual rye grass to keep a lawn looking green. You will need to water more frequently to get the seeds to germinate, but only a few BRIEF minutes each day for a couple of weeks-just enough to get the seeds wet.
- **Lower the mower blade.** If you increased the height during the warm months, return to the recommended height for your type of turf. Hybrid Bermuda: 1/2 to 3/8 inch; Tall Fescue: 2-2½ inches.
- **PLANT! Fall is the best time of year for planting in Southern California.** The soil is still warm, but the days and nights are cool. Winter rains are just around the corner to encourage good, deep root systems so plants will be ready for a surge of growth in the spring.
- **Change the battery.** If your irrigation controller has a backup battery, now is a good time to install a fresh one. Without a fresh battery, if your power goes out, your sprinklers will revert to the factory default setting of ten minutes per day. That's way too much water!

SUGGESTED WEEKLY WATERING SCHEDULE FOR THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

WEEKLY WATERING SCHEDULE FOR SPRAY HEAD IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

	Turf grass	Trees, shrubs, groundcover	Percent Option*
September	4 days, 2 cycles of 3 minutes	2 days, 2 cycles of 4 minutes	70%*
October	3 days, 2 cycles of 3 minutes	2 days, 2 cycles of 3 minutes	50%*

**By "cycling" your irrigation timer to turn on for the suggested number of minutes an hour apart, you reduce runoff and gain deeper watering and healthier root growth. Start with this weekly schedule and increase the times only if your plants show signs of stress. If stress occurs only in isolated areas, check your irrigation system before increasing the time.*

***Some irrigation controllers have a feature by which the watering time can be set by changing the percentage instead of specifically entering the days, cycles and minutes. If you don't have the instructions for your controller, check the manufacturer's website. Many controller manufacturers provide online access to the owner's manual.*

Online Gardening Class

Want to garden "California Friendly-style" but don't know how to begin? This self-guided web tutorial will give you the basics in an easy-to-follow format in just 15 minutes per segment. Visit <http://www.bewaterwise.com> for the complete tutorial...and enjoy!

IRWD OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING HOLIDAYS:

- Thursday and Friday, November 24 and 25

SHADETREE PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

Community service hours are available for all volunteer tree planting activities. For more information call (949) 453-5670 or visit their Web site at www.shadetreepartnership.org.

SEA & SAGE AUDUBON

- **Saturday, October 22 from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. - Pancake Breakfast.** Sea and Sage will host it's 13th Annual Pancake Breakfast and Used Book Sale at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. Cost: \$7 for adults, \$4 for children 4-10 years, and free for children under 3. For reservations, directions, donation of used books, or volunteering to help, call Audubon House at (949) 261-7963.

- **Pet Trek 2005 Fundraiser • Saturday, October 1** at 9 a.m. at Colonel Bill Barber Marine Corps Memorial Park

The Irvine Animal Care Center and Irvine Pet Partnership, in cooperation with Hill's Pet Nutrition and Ralph's Grocery Co., present the annual 3-K walkathon "Pet Trek 2005." Participants will enjoy a walk with their dogs along the San Diego Creek while raising dollars for the homeless pets housed at Irvine's Animal Care Center. Schedule of events: 8 a.m. - registration, 9 a.m. - Pet Trek, 10 a.m. - contests and entertainment by the high-flying canine performers of Muttley Crew, 9 a.m. to noon - vendors and displays. For more information or to register visit www.irvineshelter.org or call (949) 724-7741.

PETER AND MARY MUTH INTERPRETIVE CENTER EVENTS

- **Saturday and Sunday, October 15 and 16 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**
The event will feature the sale and show of original art of 60 or more Southern California Plein Air Painters Association (SOCALPAPA) artists who will take part in the "Paint Out" around Newport Bay from October 1 to 14. The Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends will receive 30 percent of the proceeds from the sale of the paintings. Bring the whole family and let everyone explore the many nature exhibits in the Interpretive Center. View the Kids' Plein Air Painting Exhibition. The Muth Interpretive Center is located at 2301 University Drive, Newport Beach. For more information visit one of these Web sites at www.newportbay.org, www.socalpapa.com or call (949) 923-2269. You can also reach SOCALPAPA at (714) 654-1200.

FAMILIES FORWARD NEWS

- **Volunteers needed.** Families Forward is preparing for a number of upcoming special programs and is in need of additional office volunteers. Office volunteers answer the phone, relay messages, schedule pantry appointments and provide referral information for clients seeking housing and other assistance. Office volunteers are expected to make a three month commitment of one two- to three-hour shift per week. Interested persons should contact Sally Snyder, Director of Volunteers, via e-mail at ssnyder@families-forward.org or by phone at (949) 552-2727, Ext. 226.
- **Saturday, October 29 - Annual City Wide Food Drive** conducted by National Charity League for the benefit of the Families Forward food pantry, will take place in front of markets through out the city of Irvine. Food items needed include peanut butter, jelly, pancake mix, canned fruit, canned milk, canned meat (not tuna), pasta, pasta sauce, canned tomatoes, tomato products, muffin mix, and canned stew. Food donations may also be dropped off at Families Forward, 9221 Irvine, Blvd., Irvine, 92618, Monday - Thursday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

CENTEX HOMES, SHEA PROPERTIES AND SHEA HOMES DINOSAUR DASH XV •

Sunday, November 6 (rain or shine) at The Market Place at I-5 and Jamboree

- Dinosaur Dash is a 5K run/walk (starts at 8 a.m.), 10K run/walk (starts at 8:30 a.m.) and a 2K Ralphs/Food 4 Less Foundation Brontosaurus Blitz fun run/walk for kids (starts at 9:45 a.m.). Event day registration opens at 6:30 a.m.
- A premier road race in its 15th year, the Dinosaur Dash features a flat, fast course, and is an official warm-up race of the Los Angeles Marathon.
- Family Fun Zone from 7 to 11:30 a.m. - game booths, mobile bowling lane and EXPO area with music, and a food court, featuring six restaurants.
- Proceeds benefit the Tustin Public Schools Foundation (TPSF). Since 1989, funds raised are donated to Tustin Public Schools for use in classrooms and libraries for students. TPSF has given over \$1.4 million to all 28 schools.
- Registration costs: adults - \$25 (\$30/late-Oct. 18); youth (17 and under) - \$15 (\$20/late-Oct. 18). T-shirt included. Lunch tickets: \$5 (includes drink).
- To register or for more information contact Tustin Public Schools Foundation at (714) 832-3060, FAX (714) 832-1857, Web site: www.dinosaurdash.net, or e-mail: info@tpsf.net.

IRVINE COMMITTEE OF THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

If you would like to make new friends and attend social activities with other outstanding women, enjoy volunteering, and want to support Orange County's longest-established and most prestigious music organization with its educational outreach programs, join the Irvine Committee of the Philharmonic Society of Orange County. In addition, the La Casa Committee was created for people throughout the county who are interested in working with the American Society of Interior Design (ASID) to plan, organize, and help with the annual Entertaining by Design (November) and Philharmonic House of Design (April-May) events. To find out more about joining the Irvine or La Casa Philharmonic Committees, call the Philharmonic Society office at (949) 553-2422 to speak with the volunteer coordinator.

The mission of Irvine Ranch Water District, a public agency, is to provide reliable, high quality water and sewer service in an efficient, cost effective manner and environmentally sensitive way that provides a high level of customer satisfaction.

IRWD Board of Directors

Darryl G. Miller, President
Mary Aileen Matheis, V.P.
Douglas J. Reinhart
Peer A. Swan
John B. Withers

General Manager

Paul D. Jones II

Pipelines

Published by the
Public Affairs Department
IRWD
P.O. Box 57000
Irvine, CA 92619-7000

For comments, suggestions or questions, call (949) 453-5500.

**24 Hour Service
(949) 453-5300**

Should you discover a disruption in your water service or other problems call the IRWD 24-hour emergency line and a representative will assist you.

Visit the IRWD Web site:

www.irwd.com

Printed on recycled paper.
Recyclable
September 2005 • 93K