

SPRING · 2024

# CASITAS

NEWSLETTER

## General Manager's Corner

Hello:

I am pleased to bring you the Casitas Municipal Water District's spring newsletter: an update on the District's work to deliver quality service, a more secure water supply, and public recreation opportunities.

### Water Supply Status:

- Following several years of drought, the Ventura River Watershed recently experienced two back-to-back extraordinarily wet rainy seasons, raising the level of Lake Casitas from a low of 30% in December 2022 to 100% full in April 2024. The gage at Casitas Dam measured 35 inches during the rainy season from October 2023 through April 2024. Water supplies at Lake Casitas and local groundwater basins are at full levels and expected to last for many years provided customers continue to use water resources in an efficient manner.

### Your District At Work:

- Although the water level of Lake Casitas has rebounded significantly this year, the Ventura River watershed is prone to extended drought cycles and it is only a matter of time before the next one occurs. Preparing for future droughts and emergencies remains an important priority for the District as progress continues on water supply security projects such as the Ventura/Santa Barbara Counties Intertie.

### Recreation Update:

- The scenery is beautiful at Lake Casitas, with water levels at full capacity. The lake is open for boating and day use, although boaters should use caution due to shallow vegetation in the water and floating debris. During the off-season, upgrades were completed in the Fox campground, extending concrete pads, improving fire pits, and resurfacing roads. At the Lake Casitas Recreation Area, we are excited to offer the newly constructed play structure to children and families, along with the very popular lazy river to help you stay cool on hot days. Both the play structure and the lazy river use recirculating water through an upgraded treatment system to maximize conservation.

Thank you for your interest in your local water district, serving our community for more than sixty years.



Regards,  
Mike Flood, General Manager

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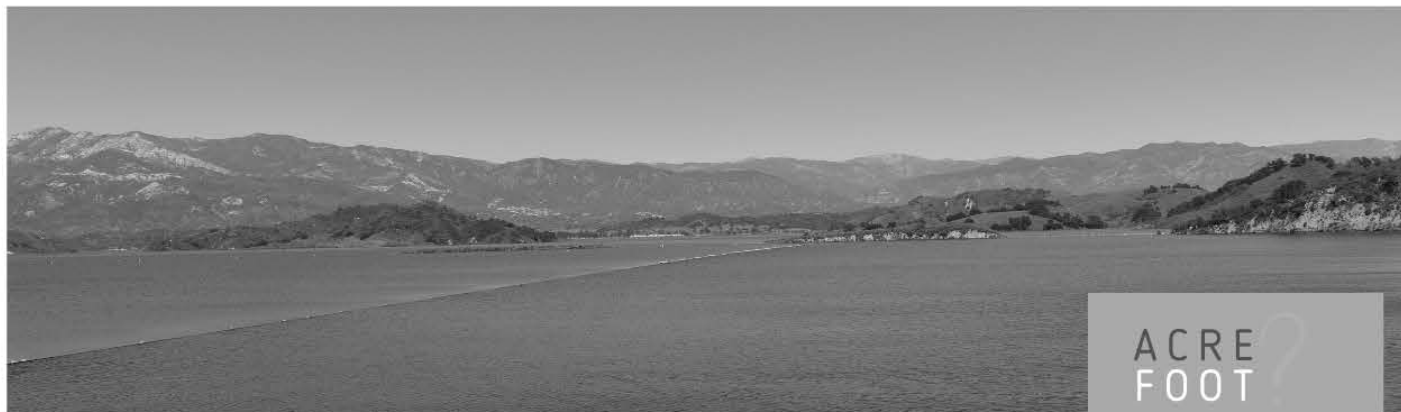
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# Water Supply Status

Casitas Municipal Water District was formed in 1952 and provides water service to western Ventura County, with customers that rely on water available for agricultural, residential, commercial, governmental, and industrial uses. All supplies currently delivered originate from the local Ventura River watershed. The major water sources are Lake Casitas and local groundwater basins.



## ACRE FOOT

AN ACRE FOOT IS DEFINED AS THE VOLUME OF WATER NECESSARY TO COVER ONE ACRE OF SURFACE AREA (APPROXIMATELY THE SIZE OF A FOOTBALL FIELD) TO A DEPTH OF ONE FOOT.

The past two rainy seasons brought an extraordinary amount of precipitation and increased water supply. We experienced record high inflows to the lake with staff working to optimize diversions. In April 2024, the water level in Lake Casitas reached 238,000 acre-feet or 100% of capacity -- a substantial increase from 30% of capacity in December 2022. The last time Lake Casitas was at full capacity was 1998. Local groundwater basins experienced remarkable recharge and recovery.

## Lake Casitas Storage Volume

In April 2024, Lake Casitas reached elevation 567.00' (which is the elevation of the spillway) and water began trickling down the dam spillway. The Casitas Dam spillway has operated nine times since its construction, including in 2024. The first spill event occurred in 1978, and the largest occurred in 1998 with a 35,000 AF spill.

The purpose of the spillway is to prevent overtopping of Casitas Dam. Overtopping could result in significant erosion of the face of the dam affecting its stability. For this reason, water passing through the spillway provides an important safety feature. Water passing through the spillway is not directly controlled by Casitas operators, but as the water elevation increases over the spillway crest, more water is passed downstream into Coyote Creek.

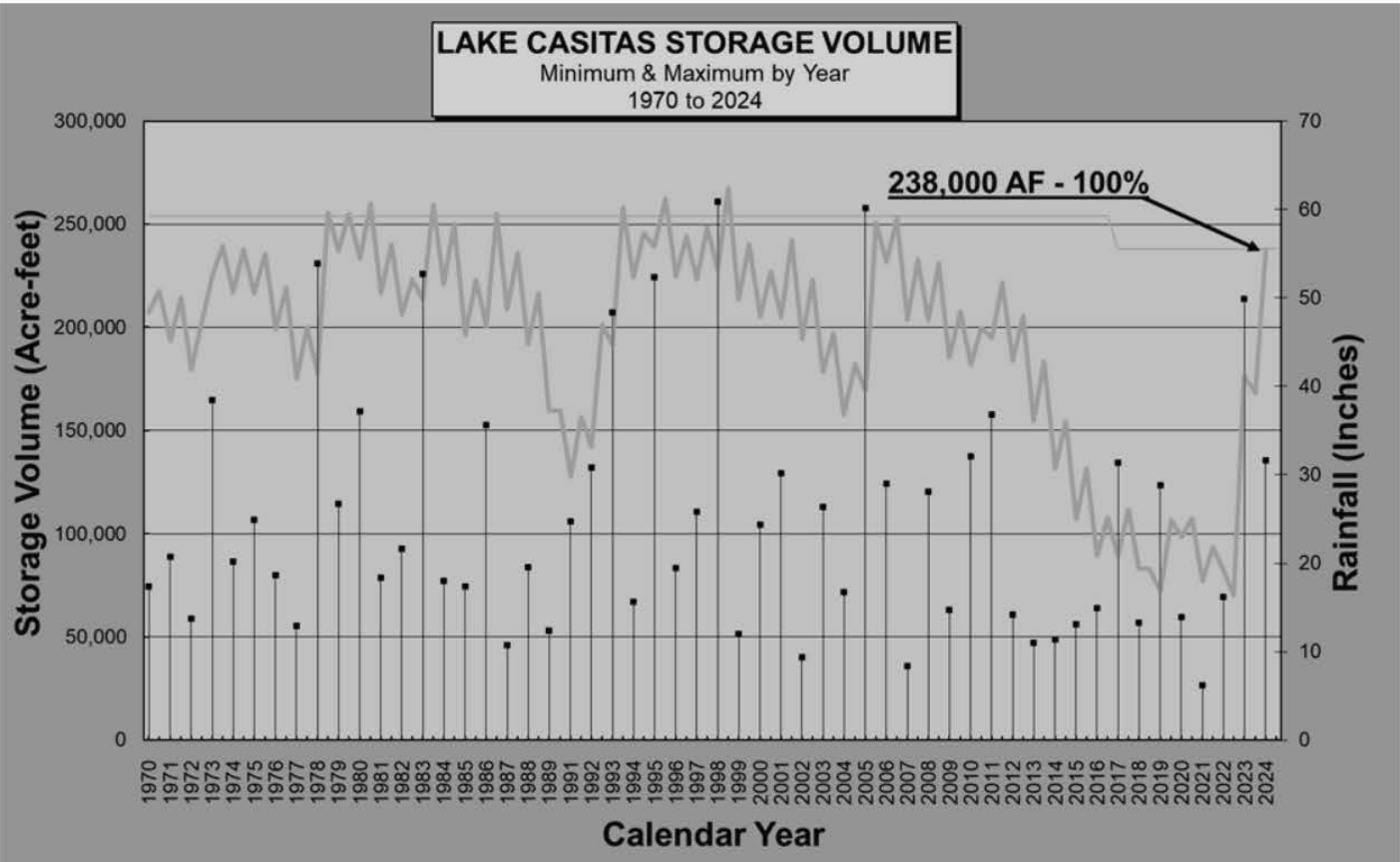


The amount of inflow coming into the lake is controlled by Casitas by ramping down operations at the Robles Diversion Facility, the water supply facility bringing water from the Ventura River into Lake Casitas. Under standard operating protocols, diversions to Lake Casitas cease when the lake level reaches the spillway elevation of 567.00 feet.

After diversions have ceased, natural inflows into the lake may cause further spilling and this is a normal part of the operation of Casitas Dam. In 2024, the spill rates fluctuated due to weather factors such as precipitation and evaporation, wave action, and customer demands on the Lake Casitas drinking water system.

As Casitas Dam approaches a spill condition, Casitas staff communicates with Ventura County about potential flows in downstream Coyote Creek. Ventura County is the agency responsible for determining if any actions are necessary to prepare for the potential flows in Coyote Creek.

There is much to be excited about with a full lake. We appreciate the support and interest from the community about the lake level and spillway operations. Casitas will continue to provide updates on the spillway operations in the next rainy season if the lake fills again. Please be aware that Casitas Dam is a protected critical water facility, and aerial equipment such as drones are prohibited at Casitas Dam and associated federal properties without prior permission.



The Ventura River Watershed has cycles of extended drought conditions followed by very wet years that fill Lake Casitas. Lake Casitas has spilled nine times since its construction: 1978, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1993, 1995, 1998, and 2024. The lake came very close to spilling in 2005 and 2006.

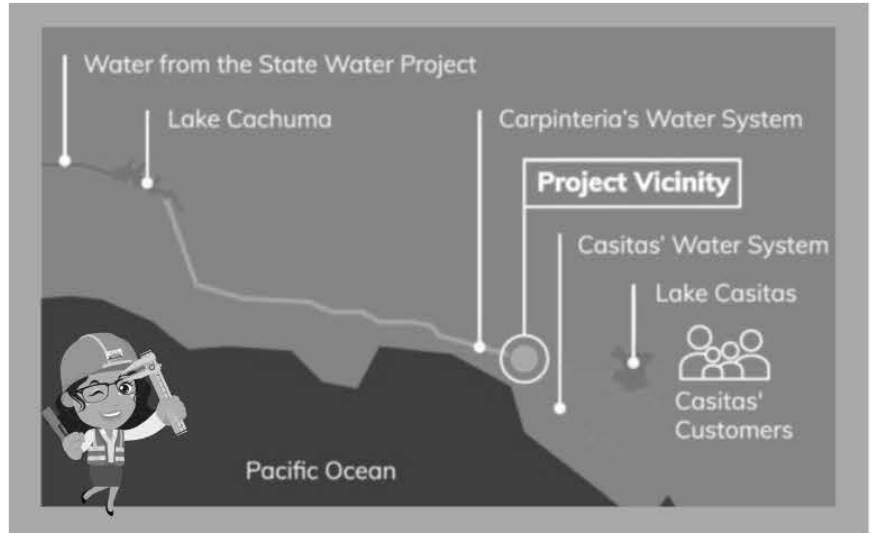
If you are interested in the current lake levels, daily updates are found here: [www.casitaswater.org/your-water/lake-level](http://www.casitaswater.org/your-water/lake-level).



# Your District At Work

Even though Lake Casitas has sufficient supply for the near future, the District continues to work on long-term water security projects to mitigate future drought risk, diversify water supply sources, and increase regional emergency preparedness.

As Casitas looks ahead to continue to meet the water needs of our customers and our community for years to come, we are partnering with the neighboring Carpinteria Valley Water District to connect our two water systems that are only 1.3 miles apart. The Ventura-Santa Barbara Intertie Project will allow access to the State Water Project (SWP) – the backbone of California’s water supply.



**Casitas is partnering with the Carpinteria Valley Water District to construct the Ventura-Santa Barbara Intertie project, which will connect our two water systems that are only 1.3 miles apart, providing access to the State Water Project and regional water conveyance infrastructure.**

Connecting to the State Water Project is analogous to connecting to a “water grid”. With an intertie in place to provide the required plumbing, doors will open for future water management opportunities with a network of other agencies connected to the system.

Casitas has always considered connecting to the SWP. For decades, Casitas has held an existing contract up to 5,000 acre-feet per year of SWP water, but has not been able to use it because we do not have the infrastructure we need to bring it here. Think of connecting to the SWP as a water insurance plan for our community – to help prevent Lake Casitas water levels from getting too low or in case of a regional emergency, we will always have the option to bring in SWP water or other supplemental water supplies.

The Ventura-Santa Barbara Intertie project will provide an average of 2,000 acre-feet per year of water supply to Casitas from the State Water Project.

The bi-directional pipe and two pump stations will also allow each agency to provide the other with water during emergencies such as earthquakes or wildfires.

Approximately \$10 million of the intertie project capital cost is being funded through grants, with the remainder of costs funded through zero-interest loan through the State Water Resources Control Board.

## PROJECT BENEFITS

- Protect long-term Lake Casitas water supply
- Mitigate short-term drought risk
- Diversify water supply sources
- Improve local water management
- Increase regional emergency preparedness

### Upcoming milestones include:

- Design complete by December 2024
- Federal environmental compliance complete by December 2024
- Agreement with State Water Resources Control Board for funding by December 2025
- Construction complete by June 2027

For more information on completed and in-progress projects, or to sign up for project updates, please visit [www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/your-district-at-work](http://www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/your-district-at-work).

## Lake Casitas Recreation Area

With a full lake and green scenery, Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA) is the place to visit this year! In addition to camping and fishing, there are attractions for just about everyone. A few examples are the Wadleigh Arm trail for a quiet stroll around the east side of Lake Casitas. Another is the Coyote Point Disc Golf Course a beautiful challenging course overlooking Lake Casitas. The professionally designed course is set in rugged terrain with concrete tee pads, and plenty of tight shots and elevation changes make every shot imaginable with a few different discs. The Ventura Disc Golf Club maintains the course and hosts the annual Coyote Classic Disc Golf Tournament each fall.



## Casitas Water Adventure

Casitas Water Adventure (CWA). CWA is revving up for a new season of fun! Scheduled to open May 24, 2024, with ticket purchasing options online or in-person. Seasonal tickets are also available.

Prepare to create an unforgettable summer in 2025 with the grand opening of Casitas Water Adventure's spectacular family entertainment center! Imagine this: not just one, but two versatile rooms, each capable of accommodating up to twenty-five guests, nestled within the thrilling ambiance of our water park.

Whether you're commemorating a special occasion or simply craving a day of excitement, our center guarantees the ideal combination of festivity and aquatic thrills in the Lazy River, and the Splashtacular Mega Play Unit. Join us and create memories that will endure for a lifetime!



For more information, visit [www.casitaswater.org/recreation](http://www.casitaswater.org/recreation)

## Groundwater Adjudication Update

Casitas is committed to defending the District's water rights on behalf of you, our valued customer. Several parties have requested a temporary stay in the case to allow a mediation process to occur. A major outcome of mediation has been an order exempting small water users. The mediation initially included discussions among local parties and has recently extended to discussions with the State agencies, which include the State Water Resources Control Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. While progress has been made through the mediation process, the parties continue to work through several issues due to the highly technical and complex nature of the case.

In the most recent Court hearing on May 3, 2024, all of the major parties in the mediation effort requested an extension of the stay to allow the mediation process to continue. The Santa Barbara Channelkeeper organization objected to the length of the stay and pushed to bring the case back into litigation, which would eliminate the progress made by the mediation parties working together outside of the Court. Casitas believes mediation continues to be the most efficient and cost-effective path forward to resolution of a lawsuit. The Court ordered a stay until November 27, 2024 to allow for mediation to continue.

The adjudication process may take several years to resolve, and Casitas is focused on an outcome based on the best science and an effective long-term management structure.

All of Casitas' court filings are publicly available on our website:  
[www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/adjudication-information](http://www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/adjudication-information)