



# THE CASITAS WATER NEWS

## United States Bureau of Reclamation Presses Casitas For an Interim Agreement to Operate Recreation Area

The United States Bureau of Reclamation is seeking an interim agreement with the Casitas Municipal Water District to operate the Lake Casitas Recreation Area. It claims that there is no current agreement for Casitas to operate the Recreation Area and that one needs to be made. Casitas has run the Recreation Area under existing contracts for the past 46 years. The Bureau is asking for the Lake Casitas Recreation Area to put aside 10 percent of gross earnings or \$300,000 annually into a trust fund for capital improvements and for additional funds to be set aside to maintain a particular level of maintenance. Casitas will respond to the Bureau's proposal by late February of 2007. The Bureau agreed to provide another proposal to Casitas with additional changes by early March of 2007.

Recreation does not have the money to pay for the Bureau's demands. The only way Casitas could pay for the Bureau's recommendations would be to use funds from water district operations. However, there is a concern with using water operation revenues for Recreation's operations. Casitas' water customers have previously argued against paying for Recreation's operations because 85 percent of park visitors come from outside of the district.



*The proposed Recreation Management Plan goes over what types of recreation activities can take place at Lake Casitas, such as boating and fishing.*

pay up to 20 percent more in administration costs. There is a baseline cost that would still need to be met for water operations even with a cut in administration services to Recreation. The goal of Recreation's economic plan is to keep Recreation financially self-reliant well into the future. This plan includes regular improvements in the park that address not only recreation customers' demands, but also generates revenue to pay for improvements, regular operations and maintenance.

### Bureau Continues Work on Plan for the Lake Casitas Recreation Area

Representatives from the United States Bureau of Reclamation and Casitas Municipal Water District have held a series of public meetings to review a proposed Recreation Management Plan (RMP). The proposed plan goes over what types of recreation activities can take place at Lake Casitas, such as camping, boating and fishing. The Bureau has proposed three alternative scenarios and is now reviewing each of them as follows:

1. Baseline Proposal: Includes all recreational activities that currently take place.
2. Enhanced: Contains all current recreational activities with some minor improvements or modifications.
3. Expansion Proposal: In addition to all current recreational activities with minor improvements, this option will signify improvements and changes that will result in major increases in the types of recreational activities.

During a series of meetings held over the last couple of years, the Bureau asked for public comment on each of the three proposed alternatives above. Two meetings were held, one in 2005 and the other in 2006. The Bureau and an environmental consultant placed recreational activities into different categories depending on where they fell by definition and then solicited the public's comments regarding the proposed recreational activities. The proposed activities included everything from swimming in Lake Casitas to horseback riding around the lake. The Bureau will consider the public's input as well as the possible impacts that such expanded recreational activities could have on water quality and water treatment. A draft plan could be ready for comment by Bureau staff as early as June of 2007 and be ready for public review sometime later in the year.

### Organic Strawberries Course – Thursday, March 8

8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

2111 Ortega Hill Road  
Summerland, California

Cost: \$20 if registered by March 7 or \$25 at door. For Information call  
Monica Barricarte, Cachuma RCD  
805-928-9269 Ext. 120

### Events at Lake Casitas

 **Family Fun Fishing Day**

**Saturday, March 24**

For more information visit our Web site  
[www.lakecasitas.info](http://www.lakecasitas.info)

Water customers have realized some benefit from Recreation's fiscally prudent budgeting during the last two decades. Recreation managed to nearly break even over the last 18 years. Recreation pays about \$750,000 in overhead costs each year to Casitas' water operations. Without these funds, water customers could

# High Winds Impact Lake Casitas Recreation Area

## Lake Casitas Recreation Area Cleans Up After Severe Damage From Windstorm

High winds at the end of December of 2006 damaged facilities and grounds throughout the Casitas Recreation Area. Thirty trees were downed and at least 50 more trees lost large branches. Casitas employees, including Gerrold Grigsby, Larry Chavez, Dale Godfrey, Lisa Kolar, part-time maintenance staff and park hosts, all worked hard to clear off roadways and remove large trees as quickly as possible.

The marina took the brunt of the windstorm with all three concessionaire docks shoved into the front of the marina. One concessionaire reported 10 of his boats were either swamped or sank. There was a considerable amount of flotsam that needed to be recovered from the lake as well.



*Tree falling on boat and camper in Lake Casitas Recreation Area. This was one of 30 trees that fell during the late December windstorm.*

## Drinking Water Reliability to Improve with Installation of New Radio Towers



*From left: Casitas employees John Parlee, Gerry Herrera, Kevin Champlin and Troy Legg, a consultant with Electronic Systems Technology, work on installing one of two radio towers that make up part of Casitas' new wireless communication system.*

Obsolete wireless communication equipment that is now over 10 years old is being replaced with state-of-the-art high-speed wireless communication equipment. Seventy process computers located at 40 locations across the district, utilize this wireless modem communication system. Casitas will use the new wireless system to control every function that is necessary to divert, treat, pump and store water prior to it being delivered to our customers.

Troy Legg, Radio Frequency Engineer with Electronic Systems Technology Incorporated, is assisting Casitas employees with installing the new system. Casitas employees Charlie Davis, John Parlee, Gerry Herrera and Kevin Champlin have also worked on this project.

The total cost for this critical maintenance project is \$175,000.



*Numerous branches fell near water park.*



*A downed tree blocks a parking area.*

## Are You a Farmer Who Wants to Improve Your Crop Yield or Reduce Your Irrigation Costs?

Farmers who want to increase their irrigation efficiency and crop yields are encouraged to participate in the Agricultural Water Audit Program to be held this summer. This program, which is being sponsored by Casitas and funded in part by a grant from the United States Bureau of Reclamation, will offer free distribution uniformity testing for Casitas' agricultural customers. The Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo will provide an evaluation team to visit with agricultural customers and conduct thorough irrigation evaluations. Priority will be given to those agricultural customers who use an above average amount of water per acre, but all of our customers are encouraged to apply. This is just one of many initiatives that Casitas is now working on to assist our customers with increasing their water use efficiency.



*Ojai orchard.*

### How Can I Participate in This Free Program?

Contact Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager, at 805-649-2251, Extension 118.

## Casitas Honors Retiring Employees

In December 2006, Casitas honored two employees who retired with each having over 35 years of service. Merl Meach was with Casitas for 36 years and Dwight Clements for 35 years. Meach, Casitas' Mechanic began working for Casitas in 1970 and Clements, Chief Treatment Plant Operator, started shortly thereafter.

Dwight Clements worked under three general managers and nine supervisors over the past 35 years. When he started in October of 1971, Casitas did not have a treatment plant. After the treatment plant was built in the mid-1990s, Clements became the Chief Treatment Plant Operator. In that capacity, he made sure that the water being delivered to customers was safely treated at all times.



*From left: John Johnson, general manager, and Dwight Clements, chief treatment plant operator.*

"I knew this day would come, I just did not know it would be so soon," stated Clements about his retirement. He also said, "It (Casitas) provided a good living and I had a beautiful place to raise my family." Clements lived at the Casitas Dam, where he worked at the Treatment Plant, and served as the Dam Tender.

"Casitas is losing a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience with the retirements of Merl Meach and Dwight Clements," stated John Johnson, General Manager. Johnson added, "I commend them for their hard work and dedication to Casitas and congratulate them on reaching this milestone in their lives. I wish them all the best, they will be missed!"

# A Closer Look at Wise Water Use

## Why Go Native?

Don't have sprinklers or the money to install them in your yard? A California native plant may not require the use of sprinklers. Native plants already like the climate. They have adapted to our environment, making them much easier to take care of, and that means less watering and less time working in the yard. There are some California native plants that are endangered in the wild. By planting them in your yard, you might be helping them to keep going.

What kind of plants are we talking about? No, it is not only cactus and succulent plants.

## Here Are a Few Examples:

**Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*)** Silvery-green leaves, arching branches and lots of purple flowers in the spring and summer. This plant grows up to four feet tall.

**Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)** This shrub will grow to six to eight feet in height and works great as a screen plant.

It bears a black berry and tolerates all soil types.

**Christmas berry, holly berry or toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)** An evergreen shrub that produces white flowers and large bunches of bright red berries that attract birds. This shrub can be pruned into a small tree.

**Bush poppy or Island bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida* or *D. harfordii*)** This evergreen shrub is difficult to find, but well worth your search. It grows up to six feet tall or it can be maintained at three feet, but requires pruning if it is to be kept in a compact form. Its leaves are blue-gray-green and the bush is covered in attractive yellow blooms.

California Native plants are a specialty item at most nurseries. If your nursery does not carry a certain native plant that you are looking for, be sure to ask about ordering it. Specialty ordering is a common practice in the nursery business. If your native plant is not available, be sure to consider similar types of native plants.

**CASITAS SPEAKERS BUREAU:** Casitas is committed to our community. As part of our efforts to better serve you, we created the Casitas Speakers Bureau to provide our customers and the community with an even greater opportunity to learn more about water issues in our area. If your community group or organization would like to invite a speaker to a meeting, please contact Ron Merckling, Water Conservation and Public Affairs manager, at 805-649-2251, ext. 118.

## New Wireless Communication System To Improve Customers Water Reliability



1055 Ventura Ave.  
Oak View, CA 93022  
805-649-2251  
[www.casitaswater.org](http://www.casitaswater.org)

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### Your Board in Action

**Bill Hicks**, Division I  
**James W. Word**, Division II  
**Pete Kaiser**, Division III  
**Richard Handley**, Division IV  
**Russ Baggerly**, Division V  
**John J. Johnson**, General Manager

The Casitas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet at 4:30 p.m. in the board room located in the main office at 1055 Ventura Ave., Oak View, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month.