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## El Dorado Irrigation District calls for voluntary conservation

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Saying they would rather err on side of caution, El Dorado Irrigation District officials are asking customers to reduce water use by 15 percent.

The board declared a Stage 1 drought condition Monday, calling for voluntary conservation. The district serves about 100,000 customers in western El Dorado County.

"I would rather lift a Stage 1 (declaration) than have to play catch-up," director Harry Norris said. "This puts people on notice to conserve."

The board, however, postponed for a week action on a related water rate schedule based on consumption, citing delays in public notice mailings to some customers. The hearing on the proposed rate restructuring, including a drought-rate schedule, was continued to 6 p.m. Monday.

Directors acknowledged that convincing people they need to conserve could be difficult, given recent rain and snow in the Sierra. Jenkinson Lake near Pollock Pines, which supplies about half the district's water, was at 86 percent of capacity March 19. But because of the statewide drought, the district faces significant cutbacks in the water it is allowed to draw from Folsom Lake to serve customers in the El Dorado Hills area.

About 60 people attended a hearing Monday on a water rate restructuring plan designed to distribute charges more equitably among customers based on consumption. District officials say the change is required to continue receiving water through the federal Central Valley Project, as well as certain grants and loans.

Several people protested the plan, particularly provisions for a "blended" rate that would eliminate the higher pumped-water rate charged in some areas, including El Dorado Hills and portions of Pollock Pines.

General Manager Tom Gallier acknowledged that the blended-rate proposal had reignited a long-standing controversy, but he said the difference in the charges isn't that much.

Some customers suggested that the rate structure would discourage gardens and so be inappropriate in a recession, when people could benefit by growing their food.

"People with an acre or three-quarters of an acre will be hammered," said Cameron Park resident Greg Prada. "You're going from no incentive to conserve water to punitive rates."

Board members, however, said many customers would see a decrease in water costs. They encouraged people to contact staff members or use a rate calculator on the district's Web site at

[www.eid.org](http://www.eid.org) to determine how their individual bills would be affected.

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