

# SRP rescinds water reductions for 2005

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staff writers

Salt River Project announced Feb. 7 that a two-year-old water allocation reduction would be lifted, allowing farmers and other dependent on irrigation to use water at a rate of 3 acre-feet per acre, up from 2 acre-feet.

The rescinding of the water allocation is a response to a wetter-than-normal fall and winter and the potential of additional spring runoff, SRP officials said. The new allocations most likely would last through the rest of 2005, but that could change based on the spring runoff.

Both Tolleson and Avondale receive water from SRP, and officials from both cities agree that the new water allocation is a sign that recent rains have helped the drought-weary Valley.

The decision was met with both joy and slight trepidation from Marilyn De Rosa, Avondale's water resources manager.

"We were pleased," she said, "because it reduced the amount of excess CAP water we have to purchase, and it'll save us about \$387,000 this year."

But, as De Rosa noted, "the city had two responses."

"We saved money, and we were happy we saved

money, but I was concerned about the message it sends to the public about water conservation," De Rosa said.

Just because SRP upped its allocation level does not mean that Valley residents can simply ignore long-term conservation issues, she explained.

"People see those releases and then they say to us, 'Why are we conserving water? They're putting water into the Salt River.'" De Rosa said.

SRP has two main water systems, the Salt and the Verde. SRP's Verde system, which is near capacity, is the one from which most water releases have been made.

"But their Verde system is only 11 percent of the overall system, so that kind of has to be kept in mind; 89 percent of their system is the Salt, and that's still low," De Rosa said.

Slightly surprised by the allocation levels being increased, De Rosa said what interested her even more was SRP earmarking 2.6 of every 3 acre-feet released to be obtained from stored water; that's nearly a 5-to-1 stored water vs. groundwater ratio.

"I was surprised that the ratio of stored to groundwater was so heavily weighted on the stored side," she said. "I

think that they're expecting the spring runoff to fill Roosevelt [Lake] even more."

## In Tolleson

Tolleson Utilities Director Mark Berrelez echoed Avondale's praise of the reduction.

"It tells us that SRP has plenty of water, and that's good thing," he said.

Tolleson has ground water of its own and the facilities to process some of it, but it only uses its own water during peak periods. Most of the water used in the city is SRP water and it is processed by Phoenix.

Having more water to work with allowed consumers, as well as water officials, to work on better water management practices, Berrelez said. He stressed water conservation within each home.

"We provide lots of literature, even devices to install inside homes that restrict water, to residents," he said. "Anytime you can reduce water usage it is highly recommended."

One simple conservation tip: sweep driveways and patios instead of spraying them down with a garden hose, Berrelez said.

West Valley

Highfield Park, Arizona, Friday, February 11