

IMPORTANT NOTICE

WATER RESTRICTIONS UPDATE #5

STOP PRESS:

We appear to have had a short lived but reasonable rain through the catchment on Sunday 21st. At this stage though we do not expect this will have sufficient impact at the dam to defer us from continuing with our water saving regime.

The rain will hopefully at least provided some relief on the farm and enable irrigators to recover or maintain their soil moisture levels under the irrigation restrictions.

We are currently operating under a 50% restriction regime and we have appreciated how all our irrigators have responded to the request for water saving and accurate water ordering.

The current regime will continue until 29th December. From the 30th December, the plan is to revert back to 25% restrictions and then to review the situation early in the New Year.

Our operations team is currently planning for this change on the 30th December and will advise irrigators of the supply regime and roster for 25% restriction over the next week.

WATER STORAGE SITUATION

The lake level is currently at 383.2m (41.5%) and falling at around 1% every three days.

The storage situation is tracking very close to what we had forecast prior to the restrictions and our water saving efforts so far have enabled us to extend the storage by nearly three weeks.

The 50% regime we are now in was a self-imposed restriction that has been matched through the support of OEFRAG by a significant reduction in the environmental flows we have been required to sustain in the river through December.

In January and February the minimum environmental flow requirement in the river (under the Opihi River Regional Plan – ORRP) is the lowest of any months and there is little room to reduce this without affecting the viability of the river in the lower reaches and at the lagoon especially.

Under the working rules that have been established by OEFRAG, the next trigger point for considering compulsory restrictions is when the lake gets to 25% full (380m ASL). At present, we are estimating this will occur around 20th January unless we get significant rain.

PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS

The 50% restriction is planned to remain in effect until 29th December. This is the period that the current Water Shortage Direction is effective for.

From 30th December, we require ALL irrigators to shift to a 25% restriction regime for this period.

Our experience from the first period of 25% restrictions has altered our view on the optimum regime to ensure that we can operate the schemes efficiently.

The roster regime for 25% will be six days on, two days off.

Our preference is for irrigators to be able to manage their own water take at a consistently reduced rate (i.e. a steady 75%) however we appreciate that not everybody is able to do this and the roster regime is the best option.

All those that indicated they preferred the roster regime previously will automatically be scheduled for the 25% regime on the two off, six on rotation.

If anyone that was on a roster regime, now believe they can regulate their water take to a steady reduced rate and wish to come off the roster, please advise the office urgently. (preferably email to office@opuha.co.nz, otherwise phone in on the Water Phone 021 433 522 or office 03 614 7801)

The Operations Team are currently planning the schedules and rostering for this 25% restriction regime and we will be loading in water orders to reflect the plan.

We will be advising those on a roster what their waterless days are to be. Unfortunately we will not be in a position to vary the roster and if you cannot take the water on your rostered days you will have to miss out. We have previously tried to accommodate individual needs but this creates an inordinate amount of work as it affects everyone else on the roster. So please look out for the advice note in your letterbox (or via the Water Ordering system on our web page) and be prepared to fit in with your scheduled days.

WATER ORDERING

As always, to be able to manage the restriction regime effectively and actually reduce the draw on dam storage, it is critical that irrigators maintain accurate water orders with the office so that we can determine the right amount water that must be released from the dam.

Please ensure that your water orders accurately reflect your intended water use so that we can deliver the right amount of water and limit wastage and/or situations where insufficient water is available to you or other users.

IF CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE ...

As always, if we are fortunate enough to get sufficient rain to relieve our concerns over our storage, we will review the level of restrictions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact the office (phone or email), before Xmas Day if you have any questions or require any further information in preparing for the restriction regime.

XMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD

The Operations team are rostered to provide continuous cover over the Xmas and New Year period however we would appreciate the support of our irrigators in limiting the changes over this period to manage the demands on the operations staff. The office will not be staffed on a full time basis from 25th December until 5th January.

We do appreciate that individual circumstances may change and a change in weather especially can have a widespread impact.

The key thing is to ensure your water orders are accurate.

Finally, on behalf of our Board of Directors and staff at Opuha Water, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Xmas and New Year festive season.

Regards



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