



Orange Water and Sewer Authority

A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.

NEWS RELEASE December 9, 2009

OWASA's lakes are full for the first time since June 15th

OWASA said Wednesday that its reservoirs are full for the first time since June 15th, 2009 due to higher than normal rainfall since November 10th.

The Cane Creek Reservoir, the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community's primary water source, was full when checked at about 7 AM Wednesday. Rain totaling about 0.8 of an inch in the previous 24 hours completed the refilling at Cane Creek, which was 99% full Tuesday morning. University Lake reached the full level on November 13th.

In November, OWASA recorded 8.12 inches of rain at the Cane Creek Reservoir and 7.88 inches at the Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant in Carrboro. The latter is more than twice the November average for rain at the Jones Ferry Road plant (3.62 inches). To date in December, rain at Cane Creek has totaled 2.99 inches. OWASA's Jones Ferry Road rain gauge recorded 3.46 inches, which exceeds the average of 3.23 inches for the full month of December.

"We're pleased to report that all three of our reservoirs are now full, which means that we're in good shape moving into 2010," said Ed Holland, OWASA's Planning Director. Based on water demand in the last month, OWASA's lakes have enough water to last about 16 months with no further rainfall.

However, he emphasized that conservation is still a key part of managing the community's water resources and praised OWASA customers for their conservation achievements. Drinking water sales from July, 2009 through June, 2010 are expected to average about 6.5 million gallons per day, or 28% less than the average of about 9 million gallons per day in 2001-02.

"Our water supply plan update shows that with the substantial conservation since the droughts of 2001-02 and 2007-08, and additional projected use of reclaimed water, our existing and secured water supplies will be adequate for much longer than previously thought," Holland said. Reclaimed water is highly treated wastewater that can be used for non-drinking purposes, such as irrigation and cooling tower make-up water for the University's chiller plants.

"Conservation has affected our revenues and rates, but wise water use will continue to be an essential, cost-effective strategy for ensuring that our supplies are adequate in the future," he said.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Draft long-term water supply plan update

Earlier this year, OWASA published and received comments from customers and local governments on the utility's Draft Long-Term Water Supply Plan Update. The update includes a review of past demand, a range of projections for future drinking water demand and an evaluation of costs for future water supply alternatives including future access to Jordan Lake if needed. The water supply plan update documents are available through links on the homepage of OWASA's website, www.owasa.org.

The OWASA Board of Directors may take action on the water supply plan update in January.

Conservation requirements for use of OWASA drinking water

In June, 2009, the Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County governments approved local ordinances with revised "year-round" conservation standards developed by OWASA. The "year-round" standards apply in normal conditions, and additional restrictions are put into effect in droughts, etc. The conservation standards are available in the Water Conservation section of the OWASA website or by contacting OWASA at 968-4421.

Lake capacities

The Cane Creek Reservoir has a capacity of 3 billion gallons. University Lake can hold 450 million gallons and the Stone Quarry Reservoir about 3 miles west of Carrboro can hold 200 million gallons.

OWASA CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

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