

# CONSERVATION CORNER

## **Keeping Our Rivers and Ocean Clean**

Most of the rain that falls in La Verne travels down concrete lined channels into Puddingstone Reservoir. From there, the water will travel to Walnut Creek a tributary of the larger San Gabriel River that empties into the Pacific Ocean. Along the way this water will pass through residential and industrial areas that have hundreds of thousands of people and tens of thousands of businesses. These contribute pollutants that will lower the water quality of rivers and oceans. The reduction in water quality harms the environment and species that rely on this natural source of water. Meanwhile residents have to deal with expensive cleanup, beach closures, and chemical treatment of water that harms the economy.

In order to combat this problem before it reaches the end of the San Gabriel River in Long Beach, LA County cities are implementing regional management plans for this 'storm water'. The programs goals are to more heavily regulate possible sources of pollutants like construction sites, reduce the amount of water that passes through cities to pick up pollutants, and improve or treat water quality at various points along the San Gabriel River.

While this is a big program there are a few practices that residents can adopt to start solving the problem at a small scale. For example, installing rain barrels provides benefits to water conservation and storm water management. They allow the water to be used for irrigation, car washing or other uses that don't require drinking water quality water. By reducing the amount of water that flows off of hard surfaces like roofs and driveways residents can prevent that water from picking up pollutants on the way to the ocean. New vegetation can also be designed to infiltrate more water into the ground or store more water. Innovative practices such as rain gardens or planter boxes can be placed near where water naturally falls off the roof or flows down the driveway to strategically store some of the runoff. Another option, although more expensive, is to use alternative building materials for hard and impervious surfaces. Roofs can be designed to temporarily store water reducing the peak flow of water and pollutants. Driveways can also be designed with porous pavement. Through the use of interlocking pavers more water can infiltrate through normally hard surfaces helping to prevent pollution.

## **Relief in Sight for Mandatory Water Conservation**

In Southern California, you may not have noticed the rain. Most of the urban part of the south went through another record dry year. However, in Northern California the picture is a little rosier. Near average rainfall has allowed reservoirs to begin making up some of the deficiencies from the past years, farmers to have more access to water, and cities to push for a reduction to the mandatory conservation targets from the state. So what could a little extra rain in Northern California mean for La Verne? Some relief. About 70% of La Verne's water supply is provided through the California Aqueduct which transports water from North to South. This means that while we did not see significant improvement in rainfall in Southern California we still have a little more water than we did last year. La Verne's groundwater supplies and increased allocation of imported water from the North should serve as a buffer against the threat of water shortage.

As encouraging as this is, it is not the only factor we need to consider when evaluating water use. Record high temperatures, astonishingly low snow pack and the ever growing population within the region, will force us to find long term solutions. The low hanging fruit, in this instance, is the need to adjust our mindset of drought time conservation to overall conservation. In the drier regions of the state (Southern California) water conservation must be a way of life. Although water professionals, legislators and residents are working hard to provide sufficient water resources, it will not come easy or cheap. The easiest way to reduce the likelihood of water shortages in the future is to use every drop wisely.

