

CDE develops drought-response web page for schools

By Richard Bannmer, The Reporter

DailyDemocrat.com

With the fourth year of severe drought under way, water usage and how to conserve water are issues brought into high relief amid the state's fourth straight year of below-average rainfall.

And like any large state institutions, California public schools are significant users of water.

For Woodland public school districts, there are ways to reduce water use if administrators and site leaders are willing to do a little online homework.

A new California Department of Education web page, built by school facilities and transportation services division, points the way with Drought Response Best Practices and Resources. It includes strategies that school districts can consider to reduce their water usage during one of the worst droughts in the state's recorded history. Visit www.cde.ca.gov.

The current Sierra snowpack is less than 5 percent of the average. It is critical that all Californians do their part to conserve water, CDE spokesman Giorgos Kazanis wrote in a press release.

Schools are in a unique position as centers of community, and as educational institutions, to lead by example and to educate the public on what can be done to stretch the supply of water until the drought ends, he added.

Kazanis noted that the list provided by the CDE is not exhaustive and each school district should evaluate a strategy based on the district's climate, existing conditions, and water-reduction efforts already completed. Typically, the majority of water use is for irrigation of landscaping and playfields, so a focus on outdoor areas may yield the largest savings.

He wrote that the public should be made aware that school athletic fields are key educational and community resources and, as such, need to be maintained to a minimum safety standard.

Additionally, the CDE has launched an online Twitter campaign inviting all schools and districts to share best practices using the hashtag #WaterWiseSchools.