

News Release

Pioneer Irrigation District

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CANAL MAINTENANCE BEGINS

For Immediate Use
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Irrigation water is set to be shut off to the 350 miles of Pioneer Irrigation District canals on October 10, PID officials announced today. That means the last full day of delivery is Friday, October 9. That will be followed shortly after by the start of the District's annual canal maintenance program.

Water managers say 2009 has been a typical irrigation season, but that there will be some carryover water left in Boise River reservoirs that will be held for 2010. A good snowpack and conservative water use practices employed by the District's 6,300 patrons made the carryover possible, according to Jeff Scott, PID Water Superintendent.

Idaho law requires irrigation districts to maintain their water conveyance systems to ensure proper water flow, the integrity of ditch and canal banks and to minimize the potential risk of flooding during irrigation season.

To meet that responsibility, districts need access to the canal and ditch banks. They achieve that using easements, a legal provision that gives them access to an area on either or both sides of the canal or ditch. It's the same concept used by utility companies such as cable TV, telephone, etc., who have easements that give them access to private property.

Central to Pioneer's maintenance activities is the removal of materials or other objects that encroach on Pioneer's canal banks and easements. Officials caution PID water users to remove any vegetation, bushes or trees, plus personal property such as sheds that encroach into onto a Pioneer facility. If it is not, then state law authorizes Pioneer maintenance crews to do so.

Pioneer also routinely burns weeds along canal banks as a part of its annual weed control activities. However, in recent years, it has encountered increasing problems with property owners who allow weeds to grow very tall around their private fences and right up to the easements. That creates a situation in which flames from routine weed burning can jump to those overgrown patches and create a fire hazard.

Burning is one of the best ways to control weeds, and Pioneer is partnering with other districts and local fire departments to spread the word that property owners need to properly maintain the weeds on their property in order to make it safer for us to adequately control our weeds.

The District does not spray, mow or up to the edges of fences and property lines because of liability issues. The only remedy is for property owners to correctly maintain weeds on their property.

Scott said Pioneer typically needs at least 25 feet of clear passage way from the edge of a canal or ditch to ensure room for maintenance equipment and other vehicles. However, easement requirements can vary by location, so questions about easement widths should be directed to Pioneer's office. Besides trees and brush, the District also sometimes encounters situations in which fences and even sheds have been built in the canal maintenance easement areas.

“State law give us the authority to remove items in our easement, but we prefer to work with the individual property owner to find a resolution,” Scott said.

For more information about Pioneer's maintenance operations or easements contact the District at 459-3617. There is also information available on Pioneer's website at: **www.pioneerirrigation.com**.

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