

Water Restrictions Now At Critical Level

## ***Drought Conditions Worsen; Waimanalo Farmers Forced To Cut Water Use 30%***

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**WAIMANALO, Hawaii** -- The Waimanalo reservoir is a clear picture of just how serious the situation is. State agricultural officials said they have never seen the Waimanalo reservoir this low before.

"It's actually at the minimum level it was constructed at," said Brian Kau, administrator and chief engineer with the Department of Agriculture's resource management department.

The white markers in the center of the reservoir are ten feet tall. Now that they are showing, less than ten vertical feet of useable water remains in the reservoir.

"It's never gotten to that point before," said Kau.

It's a gloomy scenario for Waimanalo farmers who depend on the water for irrigation. Farmers said they don't remember ever having to move into phase three of water rationing so early in the year. Farmers on Monday were mandated to cut back their water use by 30 percent.

"During summer time, there's no way your vegetable crops are going to survive on two days of water," said Clifford Migita, president of the Waimanalo Agriculture Association.

The Board of Water Supply has donated one of its wells and an emergency pump to help with the water crisis. Right now, the farmers are taking turns physically manning the pump three days a week. They'll have to do that until an automatic system is installed which likely won't happen until July.

"Somebody has to physically be there in case something goes wrong with the pump. They can shut it off," said Migita.

A gaping hole in the irrigation system had been making matters worse. With water a precious commodity now more than ever, Waimanalo farmers last weekend joined state agriculture workers with emergency repairs. Permanent repairs on the system won't be done for at least another year. State officials said the only other thing they can hope for right now is help from mother nature.

"We need rain," said Kau.

Agriculture Department officials are optimistic that with the emergency repairs to the irrigation system and with the emergency pump on line, it should get farmers through the worst part of the summer.

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