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(Sutter Creek) The Amador Water Agency is testing a critical well on the Lake Camanche Village water system to determine whether it can produce quality water at summertime high demand volumes.

Lake Camanche Village water system has a long history of unreliable water supply and has three abandoned wells. Nearby East Bay Municipal Utilities District has had two wells go bad. Well 14 was constructed in 2007 after the California Department of Public Health halted new connections due to concerns about the capacity and quality of the groundwater supply.

Well 14, one of the system's strongest producing wells at the time, experienced water quality problems during the summer of 2010 and was taken out of service while the Agency worked with consultant hydrogeologist Dunn Environmental to investigate the cause and possible repairs.

Water quality improved during 2011 while operating Well 14 at a low rate. The Agency received approval from the state Dept. of Public Health to operate the well at this lower rate, as Camanche's Well 6 was experiencing bacteriological problems and additional water was needed for Camanche customers.

AWA Field Services Manager Chris McKeage said at the AWA Board meeting Thursday that the Agency is currently testing the reliability of Well 14.

"Well 14 is being run aggressively over the next 60 days, to see how it will perform at typical peak volumes and to predict whether we could have trouble with it this summer," said McKeage. "If it continues to run well during this testing period, the

Agency will have greater confidence in the well and could be spared the expense of repairing the well.”

McKeage cautioned that 2011 had a lot of rain replenishing the aquifer and a relatively cool summer, so it's unclear what factors contributed to the well's improvement.

Dunn Environmental also has been testing and studying the yield and sustainability of the Camanche area groundwater under a grant awarded to the Water Agency. McKeage says that report is expected in late February and may provide insight into why Well 14 experienced problems and how best to operate the well system.

Camanche residents at Thursday's meeting asked about the status of over \$550,000 in state Prop. 84 grant funds that the Agency applied for to install water storage tank liners to extend the life of the system's 40-year old redwood tanks, and to replace approximately 200 service connections which have been failing in the Camanche system. General Manager Gene Mancebo told the Board that the grant contracts were moving forward through various agencies and he hoped that repair work could begin late summer 2012.

In other AWA news:

- The Agency is investigating the costs involved in changing all bimonthly customer billings to monthly billings. This change could benefit customers by giving them more evenly distributed billings monthly, instead of larger bimonthly bills. Staff will be bringing this matter to the Feb. 9, 2012 Board of Directors meeting for consideration.
- The Agency is also moving closer to the start-up of e-pay and e-billing on-line services. The program is tentatively set to launch March 1, 2012.