



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: July 23, 2014
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Drought Response Update

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

- A. Receive the Parks and Recreation Department 2014-2015 Strategic Drought Response Plan dated June 2014; and
- B. Hear a report on Department efforts to implement the Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The Santa Barbara City Council declared a Stage One Drought on February 11, 2014. With only limited rainfall since then, a Stage Two Drought was declared on May 20, 2014, and Extraordinary Water Conservation Regulations have been adopted. City water users are required to reduce water use by 20%, more with irrigation. If rainfall continues to be below the norm, Santa Barbara could face a Stage Three Drought as early as next spring.

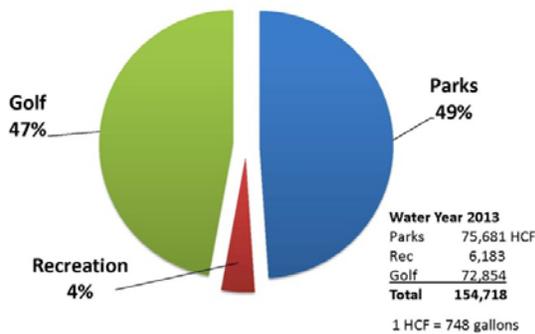
The Parks and Recreation Department manages a diverse array of public resources and facilities, including parks, trees, municipal golf course, recreation and community buildings, sports facilities, ball fields, pools and more. To assist the Department in meeting water conservation objectives staff developed the 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan (Plan). The Plan is intended as a working tool that will be modified as progress and conditions change. Water conservation is the key objective. However, as stewards of the community's park and recreation resources, the Department needs to carefully manage how and where water is used to mitigate long-term damage and potential loss of these valued community assets.

The Parks and Recreation Commission received a presentation on the Draft Plan at their May 28, 2014, meeting. With only minor changes, the now completed plan dated June 2014, is being implemented. The Plan is intended as a working tool that will be modified as conditions change.

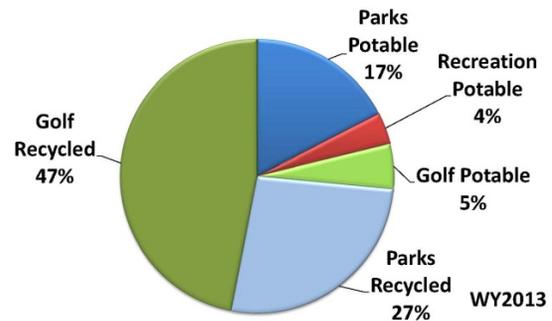
Overview of Parks and Recreation Water Use

The Department uses both potable and recycled water. Seventy four percent (74%) of all water used is recycled water for irrigation. Potable water (26%) is used in restrooms, showers, kitchens, pools, ponds, drinking fountains and watering young trees. At the golf course, the majority of water used is recycled. The primary use of potable water at the golf course is on the delicate golf greens (small, manicured area immediately surrounding each hole).

Parks & Recreation Water Use



Parks and Recreation Water Mix



Until construction of the Tertiary Treatment Facility Rehabilitation Project is complete in summer 2015, the recycled water system is delivering potable water. Once the plant is functioning, the Department’s use of potable water will decrease significantly, providing an equal benefit to the City’s potable water resources. Under normal circumstances, 1% of the City’s potable water use would be attributed to Parks, Recreation and Golf. With the recycled plant under construction, that potable water use increases to 3.2%.

Implementation

Much of the Plan has been implemented over the past several months in response to increased drought concerns. Since staff presented the Draft Plan at the May Commission meeting, the following have been implemented:

Presentations

- The Department presented the Plan to the Water Commission on July 14, 2014, and to City Council on July 15, 2014.

Swimming Pools

- The automatic backwash device purchased for Los Baños Pool will be installed early August (estimated water savings - 62,500 gallons per year)

- Four electric or battery powered blowers were purchased and in use for daily pool deck maintenance (replaces water and hose).
- The pool cover for Ortega Park Pool is ordered and will be installed upon delivery

Shower Facilities

- Water to Municipal Tennis Facility showers is turned off.
- Low flow shower heads (.62gpm vs. 1.25gpm) installed at Los Baños, Cabrillo Bathhouse, and Carrillo Gym
- 50% of Bathhouse showers deactivated, new valves installed
- Bilingual signage posted encouraging water conservation and limiting showers to 5 minutes
- Outdoor East Beach shower upper shower heads are turned off, leaving foot shower heads active.

Recreation Programs and Buildings

- Bilingual water conservation signage placed in parks and facilities
- New drought-tolerant plants installed in the Carrillo Recreation Center's front courtyard and the drip irrigation system has been fine tuned. Top dressing applied to planter beds to help with water retention.
- Outreach to Community Gardens participants on new drought regulations and water conservation
- Caterers and special event coordinators using rental facilities are following new conservation guidelines, ice is being dumped in landscape beds
- Water recreation games/activities at summer camps (i.e., balloon toss, slip and slide, etc.) replaced with non-water activities.

Golf Course

- Staff continues to work with Water Resources to resolve questions about how the water rate formula is applied at the Golf Course. Potentially the Golf Course could see reduced water cost.
- The plan to modify the potable/recycled irrigation infrastructure around the golf greens has been set aside due to concerns that overspray of recycled water would damage the greens. Staff continues to pursue other infrastructure improvements to reduce water use at the golf course.

Parks

- Chase Palm Park Plaza water fountain planted with flowers to improve appearance for event venue.
- Weekly tracking of water use through water meter readings in key parks
- Irrigation to medians, islands, and parkways turned off
- Water truck outfitted with water flow meter
- Detailed monitoring, watering, and community education plan for Historic and Specimen Trees and Street and Park trees most sensitive to drought developed

Measuring Outcomes and Progress to Date

The Department is closely monitoring the 107 Parks and Recreation water accounts with respect to water use and water cost versus budget. While water costs may increase, less water is expected to be used throughout the Department. In the Parks Division and Golf Division, most water meters are being monitored on a daily and/or weekly basis to assist with water conservation planning. Due to varying water priorities, it is expected that there may be a reduction greater than 20% in some areas, while others may have a lower reduction or even an increase in use. Division and department performance is reviewed on a weekly and monthly basis, for progress towards the water conservation target as well as monitoring of impacts to natural resources and programs.

Since the Stage One Drought declaration in February the Parks and Recreation Department's water use was down by 34% through May compared to this same period last year. Both the Parks Division and Golf Course achieved a 34% reduction. Many park areas as well as parts of the golf course are showing brown and dry conditions. The Recreation Division, which is the lowest water user in the Department, was down 27%.

	% of Total Department Water Use	% Water Conservation Achieved Feb-May 2014
Parks Division	49%	34%
Golf Division	47%	34%
Recreation Division	4%	27%
Department Overall	100%	34%

Preliminary reports for the month of June show a similar water use trend. While this is good news, with drier and warmer conditions expected in the coming months, staff will be challenged to keep conservation at a cumulative 20% water savings, particularly as turf, shrubs, planter beds and trees are already suffering from three years of extremely dry conditions. The Golf Course is showing significant brown areas, and drawing many comments from golfers, and is noticeably drier compared to local competitors. Rounds and revenue at the golf course declined in May and June, with revenue coming in \$40,000 below projections. Through the first two weeks of July play is down 15%.

Conclusion

The 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan will guide the Parks and Recreation Department to achieve City water conservation objectives. Water conservation is the key objective as the City, region, and state are facing unprecedented drought conditions. However, as stewards of the community's park and recreation resources, the Department needs to carefully manage how and where water is used to mitigate long-term damage and potential loss of these valued community assets. Staff will continue to

provide regular reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission on implementation of the Plan.

ATTACHMENT: Parks and Recreation Department 2014-2015 Strategic Drought Response Plan, dated June 2014

SUBMITTED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director