



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 27, 2015
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department
SUBJECT: Stage Three Drought Condition

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a report from Water Resources Division staff on the current Stage Three Drought Condition and water use regulations.

DISCUSSION:

For over a year, the City has been taking successive steps in response to what has turned out to be the driest four years on record in Santa Barbara. Despite the unprecedented drought conditions, our approach continues to track closely with the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan and the 2011 Long-Term Water Supply Plan. Management of customer demand is a critical part of water supply management, including ongoing efficiency improvements during normal times and extraordinary additional cutbacks during extended dry periods.

On February 11, 2014, Council declared a Stage One Drought Condition at the midpoint of a possible third consecutive dry year. On May 20, 2014, with no improvement in water supply during the last half of the rainy season, Council adopted a Stage Two Drought Condition requiring a 20 percent reduction in water use City-wide. Following another exceptionally dry winter and a worsening water supply outlook, Council declared a Stage Three Drought Condition on May 5, 2015, requiring a 25 percent reduction in water use and adopted updated water use regulations on May 12, 2015.

Water Conservation Target

Since the declaration of a Stage One Drought Condition, the City has asked the community for a 20 percent reduction in water usage to help stretch available supplies. As in past droughts, the community has responded by meeting the goal, with cumulative water reductions in excess of 20 percent since the Stage Two Drought rates took effect in July 2014. The Stage Three water conservation target of 25 percent is expected to further stretch remaining supplies while minimizing impacts to the local economy and damage to valuable community landscape resources.

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) issued new regulations on May 5, 2015, to implement the Governor's mandatory reductions. Consistent with the Governor's Executive Order, the reduction targets vary from 8 to 36 percent, depending on each urban water supplier's residential per capita daily usage during July through September of 2014. The State Board has set a 12 percent mandatory reduction in water use compared to 2013 for the City of Santa Barbara based on the per capita use by our residential customers. However, staff and Council adopted a 25 percent water conservation target based on the City's water supply situation.

Water Use Regulations

During the May 5th Council meeting, staff presented proposed water use regulations and development restrictions to take effect during a Stage Three Drought Emergency. Council directed staff to modify the proposed regulations to include only the requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board Emergency Regulations adopted on May 5, 2015. The attached Resolution (Attachment 1) incorporates the changes directed by Council and was adopted on May 12, 2015.

The Stage Three Drought Condition response is to be implemented in a phased approach, as outlined in Attachment 2. Staff has identified additional regulations that can be enacted if the conservation target is not met or our water supply situation worsens. New actions would be related to the community water conservation target, water use regulations, and development restrictions. Potential new water use regulations may involve mandating the use of high-efficiency irrigation systems or limiting or prohibiting irrigation of turf. Potential new development restrictions may include mandatory landscaping deferral, suspension of permits for projects with net new water use, or suspension of new water meter installations.

Staff believes the current water use regulations are appropriate, given the community's success in meeting the established water conservation targets. Staff plans to monitor the cumulative water savings from June through September 2015, as a basis for determining whether to recommend additional measures for Council consideration in October 2015.

ATTACHMENT(S): 1. Resolution Number 15-036
2. Stage Three Drought Phased Response Options

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