



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Agenda Item No. _____

File Code No.

Item 5

AGENDA DATE: February 11, 2014
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department
SUBJECT: Declaration Of Stage One Drought Condition

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Declaring a Stage One Drought Condition.

DISCUSSION:

As discussed at the January 7, 2014, City Council meeting, the City is experiencing the third consecutive dry year. Calendar year 2013 marked the driest year on record at many locations across the state, including Gibraltar Reservoir. On January 17, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown declared a State of Drought Emergency in California and urged officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for drought conditions.

The City plans for drought conditions based on the water supply strategy outlined in the City's 2011 Long-Term Water Supply Plan and the 2011 Water Shortage Contingency Plan. While the City currently has adequate water supplies to meet demands through September 2014 (the end of the current water year), there is uncertainty associated with the availability of surface supplies in the next water year. Not only are future hydrologic conditions uncertain, the California Department of Water Resources and the California State Water Resources Control Board have advised that available water rights and State Water Project allocations may be re-allocated to areas experiencing an extreme water shortage emergency.

With the potential need for cutbacks in water demand in the next water year, staff recommends the declaration of a Stage One drought condition ("Water Shortage Watch"). Stage One is the first of three stages under the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan. The goal in declaring a Stage One Drought Condition is to alert the public that there is a potential for serious water shortage if dry weather continues, and that planning is underway to address such a contingency through the use of alternate City water supplies.

Due to the record drought conditions we are having along with above normal water usage , City water customers will be asked to reduce water usage by at least 20 percent through

voluntary conservation. Substantial conservation by customers starting now could delay the need for Stage Two and Stage Three mandatory measures.

A Stage Two Water Shortage Condition (“Water Shortage Alert”) is to alert the public of an anticipated water supply shortage in the short-term. A Stage Two Condition will have mandatory water restrictions accompanied with changes to the water rate structure that encourage additional water conservation and account for increased costs of water supplies. Also to be considered would be postponement of approvals for development and new well permits.

A Stage three Water Storage Condition (“Water Shortage Emergency”) is the highest level of drought response. Stage three is triggered by worsening water supply conditions or the need for more aggressive reductions in water use.

In the next couple of months, staff will be working on the following services to support drought preparation efforts:

- Securing services from a consultant specializing in water transfer negotiations to assist in the purchase of additional water through the State Water system.
- Securing services specializing in water rate modeling to establish a temporary water conservation-based rate structure.
- Seeking Council approval to increase authorization to the City’s water rights special counsel to provide legal support on groundwater management and surface water rights matters.
- Securing engineering services to develop performance specifications for restarting the desalination facility.
- Securing professional services to support projects associated with the City’s groundwater resources and well infrastructure.
- Securing services to address increased public outreach for enhanced water conservation messaging.

It is anticipated that Council approval may be required for some or all of the above-mentioned services supporting drought response.

Going forward, staff will regularly keep Council and the public informed. Staff anticipates doing so through frequent Council meetings, monthly public Water Commission meetings, monthly billing inserts, and increased media communication outreach.

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SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca Bjork, Acting Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator’s Office