



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

ITEM 8

AGENDA DATE: April 14, 2015
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department
SUBJECT: Stage Two Drought Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive an update on the status of the current drought and related efforts.

DISCUSSION:

On February 11, 2014, Council declared a Stage One Drought Condition and asked customers to reduce water use by 20 percent. Council requested that staff keep them informed and report back monthly with a status update on the City's water supplies, conservation efforts, and current work efforts. On May 20, 2014, Council declared a Stage Two Drought Condition in response to a continued water shortage forecasted for next year, and the inability of the community to reduce water usage by 20 percent. This report will cover the following items:

- Water Supply Outlook/Weather Forecast
- Drought Response Capital Projects
- Drought Staffing
- Conservation Efforts

Water Supply Outlook

Despite some promising rainfall in the first part of this water year, our water supply outlook remains unchanged. We need prolonged wet weather to make a significant impact on our current water supplies. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) is projecting equal chances of above and below average rainfall throughout the remainder of the rainy season. We have seen below average rainfall in January and February, and to further compound the matter, we have seen above average temperatures, which has significantly diminished the benefits of the small amount of rain we have received. Due to the uncertainty in projected rainfall, staff is planning for continued drought conditions. Staff continues to work on securing additional supplemental water, accelerating drought-related capital projects, and sustaining a strong message for extraordinary conservation. Staff will be presenting the most recent water conservation numbers for March 2015. While water conservation in February

2015 was only six percent below average, the cumulative savings from July 2014 through February 2015 were 22%.

Drought Response Capital Projects

Staff is moving forward with the design and construction of capital projects to assist with the water supply during the drought. Highlights include construction of a new Alameda Well and operation of all three downtown wells: the Corporation Yard Well, Vera Cruz Well, and City Hall Well. Water from the three wells is being treated at the Ortega Groundwater Treatment Plant and then put into the water distribution system.

On March 24 and 26, 2015, staff conducted interviews with design-build-operate contractors for the reactivation of the City's Desalination Plant. Staff is currently in negotiations with the top firm and anticipates awarding a contract for the project in June 2015. Confirmation of loan funding for this project is anticipated in the same June timeframe. The Desalination Plant is planned to be operational in Fall 2016.

Efforts to secure supplemental water for next year are going well. We are anticipating having 4,500 acre-feet of additional water under contract by May 2015.

Drought Staffing

Workload for the Water Conservation Program has increased significantly during the drought. To support program needs, staffing for the Water Conservation Program increased in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. Initially, three hourly staff were hired to work full time, with an annual limit of 1000 hours. In order to allow trained hourly staff to continue working full-time during FY 2015, Council adopted Resolution 14-078, amending the Position Control and Salary Resolution to include three limited-term Water Resources Specialist positions that expire on June 30, 2015. Given continued and worsening drought conditions, the contract term for these positions is anticipated to be extended to June 30, 2016.

In addition, two regular 0.5 Water Resources Specialists have been working full time during drought. For Fiscal Year 2016, staff will be requesting that these positions be increased to 0.75, along with a budget that allows up to full-time support. This will allow current staff to continue working up to full time and accrue benefits for 0.75 that correspond with their respective hiring date. These positions will be re-assessed after the drought is over and will be adjusted depending on workload and program needs.

Finally, staff anticipates the need for one more hourly position in FY 2016 to support enforcement of additional water use regulations, should they become necessary as part of a Stage Three Drought condition.

Water Conservation Program staffing support will be included in the FY 2016 budget request as well as the proposed FY 2016 Position Control and Salary Resolution.

Conservation Efforts

Due to the high demand for the Smart Landscape Rebate Program during the drought, the budget of \$185,000 for FY 2015 has been spent. Additional funds, in the amount of \$80,000, have been reallocated to continue funding the rebate program. The additional funds came from the cost savings associated with the postponement of the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board pumping project at Lake Cachuma, which has yet to be activated.

Staff has increased the Water Conservation Outreach Program through an enhanced drought media campaign: additional targeted outreach, including increased weekly messaging through social media, online news outlets, and industry contacts; presentations to community and industry groups; additional printed materials with drought messaging; targeted utility bill messaging; drought signage at City facilities; and additional trainings and workshops.

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