



Agenda Item No. \_\_\_\_\_  
File Code No.

# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**ITEM 5**

**AGENDA DATE:** May 12, 2015  
**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers  
**FROM:** Water Resources Division, Public Works Department  
**SUBJECT:** Annual Wastewater Collection System Report

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council receive a report from staff on the wastewater collection system maintenance and management activities.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The City operates 257 miles of wastewater collection system pipelines, the majority of which are six or eight inches in diameter and serve to convey wastewater to the City's El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant. The operation of the wastewater collection system is regulated by the State Water Resources Control Board under a Waste Discharge Requirement Permit.

In April 2011, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper filed a lawsuit against the City in Federal District Court, alleging violations of the Clean Water Act caused by spills from the wastewater collection system pipes. The City and Channelkeeper agreed to the terms of a Consent Decree in March 2012. By the time the Consent Decree was negotiated, the City had already committed over \$400,000 and very substantial staff resources to the development and implementation of management practices to improve collection system operations, thereby reducing spills. This work was incorporated into the Consent Decree and is the basis for most of the requirements of the Consent Decree.

In addition to developing and implementing the management practices, the City agreed to rehabilitate an additional two miles of collection system pipes each year, beyond the one percent per year that, historically, has comprised the capital improvement plan for collection system repair/rehabilitation and replacement.

The City has committed to report to Council by March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, during the term of the Consent Decree, on the previous year's activities and to project the current year's work, particularly as it relates to the rehabilitation, replacement, or repair of wastewater collection system pipes. The City was successful in meeting or exceeding the maintenance practices and capital improvement work objectives required by the

Consent Decree. This report is available in the Council Reading File and in the City Clerk's Office for review. The report will be summarized in the staff presentation.

While meeting the requirements of the Consent Decree, the City failed to achieve an important metric. The Consent Decree sets forth a Sewer System Overflow Reduction Performance Standard (SSO Standard) for collection system spills. The SSO Standard for 2014 was 12 spills and the City had 23. This high level of spills is frustrating to staff as we were successful in limiting the number of spills to 9 in 2013. This year's performance illustrates the difficulty of identifying which pipes are at risk for spill.

None of the spills caused a beach closure, and the volume spilled to public waterways was limited to approximately 560 gallons. Nonetheless, we are now undertaking additional measures to reduce SSOs to the SSO Standard. Exceeding the SSO Standard does not put the City in violation of the Consent Decree, but it does require that the City identify and implement additional measures designed to reduce spills to within the SSO Standard. These additional measures must be developed in a report, submitted by March 31 of the year following the SSO Standard was exceeded.

Acknowledging that it would not meet the Consent Decree sewer spill performance goals by year's end, the City proactively identified additional sewer maintenance activities to undertake in mid-2014: contract chemical-root foaming and contract acoustic-sounding of sewer mains. The City shared these proposed activities with Channelkeeper in September 2014. As required by the Consent Decree, staff has prepared a SSO Reduction Action Plan that sets forth the additional measures designed to achieve the SSO Standard. This report is also available in the Council Reading File and the City Clerk's Office.

#### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Funding for implementation of the Consent Decree, along with all wastewater system costs is provided through the Wastewater rates. In Fiscal Year 2013, the rates were increased by 10 percent to provide sufficient revenue to fund increased costs of compliance with the Consent Decree and to meet other Wastewater Fund needs. In Fiscal Year 2014, the rates were increased by 4 percent, and in Fiscal Year 2015, the rates were increased by 5.5 percent to continue sufficient revenue funding requirements. The Consent Decree caps the amount the City must expend to comply with its terms. The cap is increased by 1 percent each year. Because the City failed to meet the SSO standard this year, the cap will be increased by an additional 3 percent of the wastewater collection system operating budget, or approximately \$100,000. To ensure adequate funding for collection system and treatment plant costs, staff will be recommending a 5.5 percent wastewater rate increase for Fiscal Year 2016.

**PREPARED BY:** Joshua Haggmark, Water Resources Manager/CJT/mh

**SUBMITTED BY:** Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office

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