



Agenda Item No. _____

File Code No. _____

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

ITEM 6B

AGENDA DATE: April 26, 2016

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department
Planning Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Amended Stage Three Drought Declaration – 35% Conservation Target

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Amending Resolution 15-036 to Amend the Stage Three Drought Emergency Declaration to Increase the Percent Reduction From Normal Citywide Water Use From 25 to 35 Percent.

DISCUSSION:

Over the past four years, the City has been taking successive steps in responding to the worst drought on record in Santa Barbara. Currently, the 2016 water year is projected to end in rainfall well below average with virtually no runoff to local reservoirs. The steps taken by the City have been in line with the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan and the 2011 Long Term Water Supply Plan (LTWSP), which are based on the following principles:

- Most of the City's water supplies depend on rainfall to fill reservoirs.
- Severe drought is an expected part of water supply planning and develops over a number of years.
- A drought might end in a relatively short time, but the lead time needed to ensure an adequate water supply requires an assumption of continuing drought.
- Managing water demands is a critical part of water supply management, including making efficiency improvements during normal times and extraordinary cutbacks during extended dry periods.

As a result of unprecedented drought conditions, Council declared a Stage One, and subsequently a Stage Two Drought Condition on February 11, 2014, and May 20, 2014, respectively. On May 5, 2015, in response to the driest consecutive four-year period on record, Council declared a Stage Three Drought Emergency, increasing the community's

water conservation target to 25 percent, and adopting additional water use regulations by Resolution on May 12, 2015.

The City is currently in the midst of the driest consecutive five-year period on record. The 2016 water year is projected to end in rainfall well below average. In accordance with the LTWSP, depleted surface water supplies have been replaced with increased groundwater production, purchases of supplemental water, the reactivation of the Charles E. Meyer Desalination Plant (Desalination Plant) in fall 2016, and extraordinary water conservation from the community.

Water Conservation Target

During the Stage One and Stage Two Drought conditions, the City asked the community for a 20 percent reduction in water use to help stretch available supplies. As in past droughts, the community responded by exceeding the goal, with cumulative water reductions in excess of 20 percent.

When the Stage Three Drought Emergency was declared in May 2015, the City implemented a 25 percent water use reduction. Since that declaration, the community has averaged 34 percent in water conservation.

At this time, a 35 percent water conservation target is required to further stretch remaining groundwater and surface water supplies. Taking such action now will ensure the City has adequate water supplies to meet demands through 2018, and it will delay the decision to expand the Desalination Plant by at least one year.

Water Use Regulations

Drought water use regulations during the Stage Two and Stage Three Drought conditions have generally targeted discretionary outdoor water use and have complied with statewide regulations adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board. The City has successfully curbed inefficient water use through education, rather than by issuance of penalties. Given the community's success in meeting the water conservation target to date, staff is recommending no additional water use regulations at this time.

At the state level, discussions for amending statewide water use regulations will continue throughout April and May 2016. Staff will report to Council any necessary action the City must take to remain in compliance.

Development Restrictions

During a normal year, the City's water demand is 14,600 acre feet per year (AFY). During a drought, the City's targeted water demand is 80 percent of the normal demand, or 11,680 AFY. On average, new development represents approximately 0.3 percent of the City's drought water demand projection, or 28-40 AFY (see Attachment).

Drought-related development restrictions are limitations placed on new developments to reduce anticipated water demand. Potential development restrictions were discussed by Council in October and December 2014, and in detail on April 14, 2015. Staff consulted with the Planning Commission on February 12, 2015, regarding appropriate development restrictions that could be implemented as part of a Stage Three Drought Emergency, specifically:

- landscape deferral (voluntary and mandatory);
- suspension of building permits for new pools;
- suspension of building permits for projects with net new water use; and
- Zoning Ordinance Amendments to support water conservation.

On April 14 and May 5, 2015, Council considered potential development restrictions and directed staff to include only the state requirements. This decision was made by weighing the small amount of water savings gained by implementing development restrictions against the significant impact on Planning and Building and Safety staff resources necessary to implement and enforce the restrictions, plus the potentially negative impact on the local economy.

At this time, with the exception of increasing the conservation target to 35 percent, staff does not recommend imposing additional development restrictions for the same reasons previously discussed by Council. Staff will continue to advise Council on water supply and demand statuses and will make recommendations regarding changes in water use regulations and development restrictions as appropriate.

Sustainability Impacts

The recommended conservation target of 35 percent is appropriate at this time, given the community's success in reducing demand and the need to further stretch our remaining water supplies. Staff will monitor the cumulative water savings from May through September 2016, and will use the information as a basis for determining whether or not to recommend additional restrictions for Council consideration in October 2016.

The recommended action reflects preliminary Council review and input from March 22, 2016, and ongoing discussions with the City's Board of Water Commissioners. A 35 percent demand reduction, coupled with supplemental water purchases and the reactivation of the Desalination Plant in fall 2016, would ensure that the City has adequate supplies to meet demand through 2018.

ATTACHMENT: Analysis of Water Use for New Development

PREPARED BY: Joshua Haggmark, Water Resources Manager/MW/mh
Allison DeBusk, Project Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director
George Buell, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office