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## CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

### COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** September 26, 2017

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

**SUBJECT:** Stage Three Drought Update

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council receive an update on the status of the current drought, drought-response capital projects, and continuing conservation efforts.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Council declared Stage One and Stage Two Drought Conditions on February 11, 2014, and May 20, 2014, respectively, as a result of unprecedented drought conditions. On May 5, 2015, in response to the driest consecutive four-year period on record, Council declared a Stage Three Drought Emergency. Since then, the Stage Three Drought condition has been amended with appropriate conservation targets and water use regulations in response to current and forecasted supply conditions.

On December 6, 2016, the Stage Three Drought condition was amended to increase the City's water conservation target to a 40 percent reduction, based on local water supply conditions. Most recently, on March 21, 2017, the Stage Three Drought condition was amended to decrease the City's water conservation target to a 30 percent reduction in response to recent rains, which filled Gibraltar Reservoir and increased storage in Lake Cachuma.

This drought update will cover the following items:

- Water Supply Outlook/Weather Forecast;
- Drought Response Capital Projects; and
- Conservation Efforts.

#### Water Supply Outlook/Weather Forecast

Despite above-average rainfall in January and February of this year, the average rainfall for the last six years still remains one of the driest on record. Consistent with the City's Long Term Water Supply Plan, depleted surface water supplies were replaced with

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increased groundwater production and purchases of supplemental water. As a result of increased pumping during the drought, groundwater levels are near historic lows.

While a three-year supply planning outlook indicates the City is still in a drought and must continue to conserve, the City's water supply plan shifted in response to last winter's rains. Above-average rainfall in the month of February filled Gibraltar Reservoir and increased storage in Lake Cachuma to 50 percent. The City and other Cachuma Member Units saw an increase from a zero percent annual allocation to a 40 percent annual allocation from Lake Cachuma for this water year. As a result of the modest improvements, the City's water conservation target has been reduced from 40 percent to 30 percent, and the mandatory turfgrass watering ban has been modified to reflect a voluntary turfgrass watering ban. The City has been able to meet 2017 peak summer water demands using this water supply strategy. In addition, groundwater wells were turned off to rest the groundwater basins, while water from Gibraltar Reservoir and Lake Cachuma are being used to supply City customers. This strategy will enable water demands to be met through 2019, assuming there continues to be a minimum 30 percent reduction in customer water use.

## Drought Response Capital Projects

The Desalination Plant still remains in the start-up and testing phase. The plant has produced 22 million gallons of potable water as of early September. The contractor has experienced several leaks on the intake line which have delayed completion of the testing period. Temporary repairs have been made and the contractor is working on the long-term repair solution. Once the start-up and testing phase is complete, the plant will produce 3,125 acre feet annually for City water customers, which is approximately one-third of the City's annual demands.

In summer 2017, the City recycled water plant wrapped up modifications to enhance production. The plant production has increased and is now capable of producing up to 1.7 million gallons per day. Over the summer, the plant was able to successfully meet the recycled water needs of current customers.

## Conservation Efforts

The City's 12-month running average water conservation reduction at the end of July 2017 and August 2017 was 38 percent and 39 percent, respectively, compared to 2013 water demands. With the Stage Three Drought declaration in effect and the need for a 30 percent reduction, the Water Conservation Program has continued its enhanced public information campaign of targeted outreach to specific user types, 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;

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- drought signage throughout the City; and
- additional training and workshops.

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