



Information Item

January 29, 2014

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Martin Pastucha, Director of Public Works
Subject: Water Shortage Advisory Update and Enhanced Conservation Efforts

Introduction

This information item provides an update to the Water Shortage Advisory in effect and recommended Enhanced Conservation Efforts.

Background

On [February 26, 1991](#), Council adopted an emergency ordinance to establish Santa Monica Municipal Code Chapter 7.16 implementing mandatory water conservation measures due to drought. On [June 10, 2008](#), Council adopted modifications to Ordinance [7.16.030](#) to update and amend water conservation requirements. On [June 9, 2009](#), Council adopted the Water Shortage Response Plan and declared an advisory-level water supply shortage in response to statewide drought conditions in mid-2008. On [September 13, 2011](#), Council adopted a resolution to continue the water shortage advisory as local groundwater supplies did not meet the city's total water demand.

Discussion

The Water Shortage Advisory is still in effect and calls for a voluntary 10% reduction in water use. With 2013 being the driest year in recorded history and the second drought in five years to be declared by the Governor, it is imperative that Santa Monica use its water supplies efficiently.

The Governor's call for a 20% reduction in water use as a response to the drought dovetails with the City's goal of reducing current water demand to achieve water self-sufficiency by 2020. Due to the drought, the voluntary reductions need to begin

immediately to reduce water usage and avoid mandatory water restrictions later this year. Water self-sufficiency means eliminating the City's reliance on imported water, using limited local groundwater wisely and efficiently, and optimally managing the local water supply. It also means having adequate water supplies regardless of the weather conditions.

Staff is asking residents and businesses to voluntarily cut water use by 20% from their average water use in 2013 immediately in order to become water self-sufficient and avoid a drought-induced water crisis and mandatory water restrictions.

Currently, the City maintains the capability of producing more than 70% of its water needs from local groundwater, with the remainder imported and purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). MWD receives the majority of its supplies from Northern California and the Colorado River, both of which have been significantly impacted by drought. While MWD expects to meet water demands in 2014 because of its significant investments in water storage, water transfers, and conservation in preparation for dry years, it is encouraging customers to use water wisely and efficiently. Cities like Santa Monica are being asked to develop additional local water supplies.

Santa Monica's local groundwater can be seriously impacted by drought. Each day water is extracted from groundwater wells to meet the water needs of the community. When it does not rain, groundwater replenishment is diminished. To ensure sufficient supply for the future, it is critical to reduce water consumption now. If all water users can voluntarily reduce their water consumption by 20% over previous year's usage, it is likely that the need to implement mandatory water rationing can be delayed or eliminated.

Staff will continue to monitor the water supply situation and report to Council in May/June on the impact of the voluntary efforts. In the report staff may recommend that

Council adopt the Stage 1 Water Shortage measure, a mandatory 15% reduction in water usage from the previous year's usage. This would trigger Water Use Allowances for each residential and commercial water customer if one or more of the following conditions are met:

- Drought conditions continue into the summer and groundwater levels drop.
- Water use reductions are not met.
- MWD restricts its supplies.

While it is less than the 20% voluntary reduction, the mandatory reduction would require reduction by all water users. Those who achieve 20% reduction through voluntary efforts would not be required to make additional reduction.

Water self-sufficiency takes commitment and investment. Many residents and businesses have already taken steps to manage their own water use more efficiently. In 2013 more than 400 rebates were provided for water savings products with an estimated 3 million gallons of water savings. Rebates are available for installing sustainable landscaping, water-saving drip irrigation and sprinklers, rain barrels, cisterns, toilets, urinals, and much more. There are larger rebates for specific businesses such as fitness centers, Laundromats, and public agencies.

The Office of Sustainability and the Environment will increase its outreach efforts to alert the community about the Water Shortage Advisory and the need for enhanced conservation. Additional outreach will include ads in local papers, a street banner over Main Street, periodic press releases, updates to City's website, and presentations at community events. As part of the outreach, staff will emphasize three ways to save water:

1. Check for and fix leaks. Running toilets are very common and are often ignored, but can waste thousands of gallons each day.
2. Cut back watering gardens by just a few minutes each watering cycle.

3. Replace toilets with more water-saving ones. All new toilets sold in California are 20% more efficient than models sold in 2013. A \$50 rebate is available until the end of June 2014 for toilets with a WaterSense label.

By taking proactive steps now and requesting a voluntary enhancement to Santa Monica's current Water Shortage Advisory from 10% reduction to a 20% reduction, the City is reinforcing the need to undertake sound management of water resources and with successful reductions, delay/eliminate the recommendation to implement mandatory water conservation in the community in 2014.

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