



Information Item

Date: April 30, 2015

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Dean Kubani, Manager, Office of Sustainability and the Environment

Subject: Update on the City's Drought Response Efforts

Introduction

This information item provides an update on the City's drought response implementation in response to California Governor Brown's Executive Order issued April 1, 2015 for a statewide 25% reduction in potable urban water use, the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) proposed framework of restrictions for urban water suppliers issued on April 18, 2015, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (MWD) water allocation issued April 12, 2015. Also included is information regarding water saving actions at City facilities and landscape sites, proposed Green Building Ordinance recommendations and the launch of the water conservation marketing and outreach campaign.

Background

On [January 13, 2015](#), Council adopted the update to the Water Shortage Response Plan (WSRP), re-adopted a Stage 2 Water Supply Shortage, established a citywide 20% reduction target from 2013 water usage by December 31, 2016, and approved the implementation of Water Use Allowances for all water customers (except non-potable accounts) and penalties for exceedances of the Allowance.

On April 1, 2015, California Governor Brown issued an Executive Order directing the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to impose restrictions to achieve an aggregate statewide 25% reduction in potable urban water use by February 2016. The Executive Order stipulates a 25% reduction in water use compared to 2013, but proposes flexibility in how to achieve this reduction in recognition of conservation levels already achieved by many communities around the State. The Executive Order tasked the SWRCB with developing a framework to achieve the 25% reduction goal which is expected to be officially adopted on May 5, 2015. The SWRCB issued the proposed framework on April 18, 2015.

To understand how the Governor's Executive Order and proposed SWRCB framework impacts the implementation of the City's WSRP, staff participated in a briefing with the Governor's Office on April 8, 2015. Based on information presented during this briefing, staff believes that the City's WSRP is consistent with the Executive Order and the SWRCB's pending framework. The SWRCB's proposed framework is now in a public comment period and is expected to be officially adopted on May 5, 2015. Staff will report to Council on any recommended changes to the WSRP once the SWRCB officially adopts a final framework.

Discussion

Governor's Executive Order

The Governor's Executive Order directs the SWRCB to consider the residential per capita water usage of each supplier's service area, and require those suppliers with high per capita water use achieve relatively greater reductions than those with lower use. The reduction requirements are based on July 2014 through September 2014 residential per capita water use (R-GPCD). Initial indications are that Santa Monica will be required to reduce water usage by 20%, which is consistent with the City's current goals.

However, the proposed reduction could change prior to final adoption of the SWRCB plan on May 5, 2015. Staff will provide an update to Council after the SWRCB's decision is made. Staff may also return to Council to make necessary changes to the WSRP if necessary to comply with these new requirements.

To determine if urban water suppliers are meeting required use reductions, the SWRCB will compare water production data, as reported by each individual water supplier between the months of June 2015 through February 2016, to the same period(s) in 2013. The SWRCB will assess compliance for both monthly and cumulative water usage reductions. The SWRCB has a variety of existing tools available to enforce these regulations, including conservation orders, civil or criminal penalties, and infractions.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Allocations

In order to comply with the Governor's Executive Order and proposed SWRCB framework, the MWD Board approved a Level 3 Allocation which specifies a 15% reduction in water supplied to its member agencies. MWD's reduction goes into effect starting July 1, 2015 and lasts through June 30, 2016. Water usage totals will be reconciled at the end of the year and agencies that exceed their yearly allotment will pay a higher Tier 2 pricing for the amount of water that exceeds the allotment. Tier 2 price levels have not been determined but will be significantly higher than Tier 1 pricing. These surcharges could be passed on to water customers if Proposition 218 noticing is met and Council adopts those surcharges.

In recognition of the City's proactive WSRP and water conservation levels already achieved, MWD has modified the City's required reduction to 14%. Because the City obtains 30% of its water from MWD (and 70% from local groundwater supplies), the modified allocation reduction represents 4.2% of the City's current water usage. With continued aggressive water conservation efforts and movement towards water self-sufficiency, staff is confident MWD's Allocation Level reductions can be met.

Water Use Allowance Implementation

The City's Water Use Allowances reflecting a 20% decrease in water use from the same billing period in 2013 will be applied to all water customers – single-family, multi-family, commercial, and landscaping (except those accounts using non-potable water). However, the program has been delayed until after the new State regulations are adopted on May 5, 2015, to ensure that no changes are required to meet the final requirements and to accommodate the necessary software system upgrades that are needed for successful implementation.

Application forms to request a Water Use Allowance Adjustment will be available the same time as the Allowances begin. An Adjustment is an increase to the Water Use Allowance due to financial hardship and/or to prevent a health and safety emergency condition. Only the water account holder or person/entity listed on the utility bill can apply for an adjustment.

To help water customers, staff is working with software vendors to create a new, user-friendly utility bill that will separate out charges for each utility service including water, wastewater, and refuse and clearly summarizes each customer's water usage and Water Use Allowance.

Water customers will have the equivalent of two billing cycles from when they receive their first Water Use Allowance to make necessary water saving changes before administrative citations are issued.

City Actions to Save Water

Because the City itself is a water customer, it will be assigned a Water Use Allowance of 20% below 2013 levels. The City is closely monitoring its water use.

To conserve water at park and landscape sites, the Public Works Department's Public Landscape Division has started converting some conventional spray heads to more water-efficient rotary nozzles, ceased watering ornamental turf on public street medians, removed non-essential turf at Ocean View Park (with additional areas being considered), replaced turf surrounding trees at Palisades Park and Ken Genser Square with mulch rings, and is piloting the latest smart irrigation control system technology at Marine Park and Reed Park. For exterior cleaning, recycled water is used for pressure washing Downtown Santa Monica, park sidewalks and walking paths, and beach hardscape areas. The City also uses scrubbers that recirculate water for cleaning downtown sidewalks saving hundreds of gallons of water per day. In addition, pressure washing frequency has been reduced—Third Street Promenade sidewalks are now washed five days per week instead of seven, and the washing of park tennis courts has been reduced from monthly to as necessary.

The City is aggressively conserving water inside as well. Since 2009, the Public Works Facilities Maintenance Division has installed new water conserving sinks, basins, faucets, showers, and toilets in 60% of City facilities and retrofitting continues in the remaining 40%. Technicians are regularly checking plumbing and heating and cooling systems in City facilities to prevent and quickly repair leaks. In addition, training will be provided for janitorial staff in water-efficient procedures and on the City's water conservation efforts. Lastly, continuing efforts include the possibility of adjusting water pressure within City-owned facilities and exploring opportunities to utilize recycled and reclaimed water whenever possible.

The City has numerous other water saving actions in the works and will be constantly assessing its facilities, staff maintenance standards and operational procedures to eliminate unnecessary water use.

New Green Building Ordinance Requirements

In addition to the mandated 25% reduction in water use compared to 2013, the SWRCB has banned irrigation with potable water outside of newly constructed homes and buildings that is not delivered by drip or microspray. This ban is in line with staff's planned July 2015 recommendations to Council to update the City's Green Building Ordinance (GBO). Recommended actions will include requiring indoor plumbing fixtures to be 30% more water efficient and prescriptive landscape requirements to achieve a 70% reduction in water use. Further, staff will recommend a ban on the installation and filling of new pools, except for public recreation facilities.

Marketing and Outreach

A new water conservation communication and behavior change campaign will officially launch at the Santa Monica Festival on May 9. The comprehensive campaign includes new graphics and design which will be incorporated into yard signs, window clings, Big Blue Bus ads, tip sheets and more.

In addition, staff has developed resources to help customers save water, including free home and business water consultations, sustainable landscape rebates, plumbing fixture rebates, and high-efficiency appliance rebates.

To augment the above, the following programs have been launched:

- Professional landscape consultations for participants in the Sustainable Landscape Rebate Program.
- High-Efficiency Toilet direct installations for high-water use multi-family properties.
- School water audits and High-Efficiency Toilet direct installations.
- Direct outreach to the top 100 residential and commercial water customers.

Customers are always encouraged to visit www.smgov.net/water or call (310) 458-8972 for more information from the now fully-staffed Water Conservation Unit within the Office of Sustainability and the Environment.

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