

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

TO: BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
FROM: PETER MARTIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR – WATER RESOURCES,
SANTA ROSA WATER
SUBJECT: REQUESTING COMMUNITY-WIDE 20% REDUCTION OF
WATER USE THROUGH VOLUNTARY WATER CONSERVATION
MEASURES – RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by Santa Rosa Water staff that the Board of Public Utilities, by resolution, recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution requesting water customers reduce their water use by 20% through voluntary conservation measures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Russian River Watershed is experiencing record low rainfall and extremely dry conditions for the second year in a row. Santa Rosa Water purchases approximately 95% of our water supply from Sonoma Water. Sonoma Water's two reservoirs, Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma, are at the lowest levels ever recorded for this time of year. On April 21, 2021, the Governor of California declared a drought emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties related to the existing conditions in the Russian River Watershed. On May 3, 2021 the Water Advisory Committee to Sonoma Water adopted a resolution requesting the Sonoma Water Contractors voluntarily reduce water use by 20% over 2020 levels. Santa Rosa Water has been implementing a robust regional outreach campaign since December 2020 to increase water use efficiency awareness and help customers achieve water savings. In support of this request for 20% voluntary reduction in water use, the multi-media campaign will include drought messaging, tools, education, and information on activities that will help water customers eliminate water waste and improve water use efficiency to achieve a community-wide 20% reduction in water use.

BACKGROUND

The region is facing the second consecutive year of significantly below normal rainfall totals. As of April, rainfall is below the single driest water year on record that occurred during the 1976-77 drought. Santa Rosa Water (SRW) purchases approximately 95%

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of our water supply from Sonoma Water, the region's wholesale water supplier. SRW has been working closely with Sonoma Water, and our regional partners to monitor regional supplies and prepare for a variety of potential water supply shortage scenarios this summer.

Section 3.5 of the Restructured Agreement for Water Supply (Restructured Agreement) between Sonoma Water and SRW and the other water contractors' outlines how water will be allocated during a water supply shortage and requires Sonoma Water to have an adopted water shortage allocation methodology that rewards and encourages conservation and avoids cutbacks based on percentage of historic water use. In the event of a water shortage and allocation of water by Sonoma Water, SRW has an adopted Water Shortage Contingency Plan (Shortage Plan) that outlines how the Water Department will respond to achieve water demand reductions.

SRW is a partner in the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership (Partnership). The Partnership is a regional water conservation partnership between the Cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Petaluma, Sonoma, Cotati and Healdsburg; North Marin, Valley of the Moon and Marin Municipal Water Districts; Town of Windsor; Cal-American Water; and Sonoma Water. In recognition of the second year of extremely dry conditions, the Partnership has embarked upon an aggressive regional multi-media winter outreach campaign, "It's a Dry Year. Save Water with Us" since December of 2020. SRW has been encouraging citizens to be "Water Smart" and directing them to take advantage of a multitude of water use efficiency resources and program offerings. Our community is responding, and in March 2021, SRW tracked a 400% month-to-month increase in call volumes to our Water Use Efficiency Team requesting a variety of customer-oriented services.

In addition, to preserve critical water supplies in Lake Mendocino, in early 2021, Sonoma Water received approval to reduce water releases for the second year in a row from Lake Mendocino through a Temporary Urgency Change Order approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). Since the beginning of February, Sonoma Water has been making the minimum release of 25 cubic-feet-per-second of water from Lake Mendocino to preserve critical supplies necessary for the Upper Russian River Watershed users and sustaining mandated seasonal fish flows to protect threatened and endangered fish species.

On April 21, 2021, the Governor of California declared a drought emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties related to the existing conditions in the Russian River Watershed.

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ANALYSIS

Due to historically low rainfall this winter and continued dry conditions, our region is in a drought and Sonoma Water has informed the water contractors that in order to preserve critical water supplies, they have submitted another Temporary Urgency Change Petition to the SWRCB seeking approval to continue reduced releases from Lake Mendocino and to also reduce releases from Lake Sonoma. This request also includes a proposal to reduce diversions from the Russian River, which if approved by the SWRCB, will translate to Sonoma Water determining if they need to allocate water to each of the water contractors per the Restructured Agreement and water shortage allocation methodology.

In a proactive response to the above conditions, on May 3, 2021 the Water Advisory Committee to Sonoma Water adopted a resolution requesting the members of the Partnership voluntarily reduce water use by 20% over 2020 levels.

To achieve a voluntary 20% reduction in community-wide water use, the Partnership and SRW are transitioning the outreach campaign from “It’s a Dry Year, Save Water with Us” to a drought campaign “Drought is Here. Save Water.” The outreach and education efforts encourage customers to take advantage of SRW’s water use efficiency rebate and incentive programs; improve irrigation efficiency; request free Water Smart check-ups; and reduce water use by eliminating water waste and improving water use efficiency. The placement of signage and advertisements in high-visibility locations throughout Santa Rosa will be a priority for SRW to ensure the message is received by the public.

SRW has also planned multiple public workshops (likely virtual) focused on outdoor landscape water use efficiency through the remainder of the year. Additional drought events sponsored by the Partnership will occur in SRW’s service area and also throughout the region where residents can receive a variety of tools to save water. SRW staff began targeted early morning water waste patrols in May.

SRW continues to coordinate closely with Sonoma Water and the other water contractors. Once the SWRCB acts on the Temporary Urgency Change Petition, should reductions in diversions from the Russian River be required and Sonoma Water determine water allocations are needed, Santa Rosa Water will return to the Board of Public Utilities and City Council to recommend implementation of the appropriate stage of the Shortage Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

Reduction in water sales will result in a reduction in revenue to the Water Enterprise Fund. There is sufficient fund balance to absorb this reduction in revenue during FY2020/21. In preparation for drought conditions, the Water Department reduced the FY2021/22 water budget and corresponding revenue accordingly.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(c), Emergency Projects, in that the recommendation is a specific action necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On May 3, 2021, the Water Conservation Subcommittee Meeting received information on the staff proposal and considered the recommendation that the Board of Public Utilities adopt a resolution requesting a voluntary community wide 20% reduction in water use over 2020 levels.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - 4-23-2021 Draft Water Advisory Committee Resolution
- Resolution

CONTACT

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