

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JENNIFER BURKE, DIRECTOR – SANTA ROSA WATER
PETER MARTIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, WATER RESOURCES
SUBJECT: WATER SUPPLY UPDATE AND DROUGHT RESPONSE

AGENDA ACTION: NONE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by Santa Rosa Water that the City Council hold a study session to receive information, ask questions, discuss and provide feedback to staff on water supply conditions and ongoing drought response program efforts.

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 (SRW) purchases approximately 94% of our water supply from Sonoma Water, the region's wholesale water supplier. On April 21, 2021, the Governor declared a local drought emergency for Sonoma and Mendocino counties. On April 27, 2021, the County of Sonoma declared a local drought emergency. In response to the State Water Resources Control Board Order requiring Sonoma Water to reduce their diversions from the Russian River beginning July 1, 2021 by 20% over 2020 levels and Sonoma Water informing their water contractors of a shortage in water supplies, on June 29, 2021, the City Council adopted a resolution instituting Stage 3 of the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan (Shortage Plan) in order to reduce community-wide water demand up to 20% compared to 2020 and achieve reduction targets consistent with Santa Rosa Water's allocation. Santa Rosa Water is currently implementing the mandatory demand reduction programs outlined in Stage 3 of the Shortage Plan, including enforcement of prohibitions and restrictions necessary to achieve the community-wide target of up to 20% water use reduction compared to 2020.

BACKGROUND

The region is facing the second consecutive year of significantly below normal rainfall totals. As of today, rainfall is below the single driest water year on record that occurred during the 1976-77 drought. Santa Rosa Water purchases approximately 94% of our

water supply from Sonoma Water, the region's wholesale water supplier. SRW has worked closely with Sonoma Water and our regional partners since this winter to monitor regional supplies and prepare for a water supply shortage due to critically dry conditions. SRW staff have been expending significant resources and efforts to inform the community about the critically dry conditions and assist customers in immediately reducing water use since December of 2020.

SRW is a partner in the Sonoma-Marin 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 initially embarked upon an aggressive regional multi-media winter outreach campaign, "It's a Dry Year. Save Water with Us" in December of 2020.

On April 21, 2021, the Governor of California declared a local drought emergency for Sonoma and Mendocino counties. On April 27, 2021, the County of Sonoma declared a local drought emergency. On May 3, 2021, the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) to Sonoma Water adopted a resolution requesting the members of the Partnership voluntarily reduce water use by 20% over 2020 levels. In alignment with that request, on May 18, 2021, the Santa Rosa City Council, by resolution, instituted a voluntary 20% community-wide reduction in water use over 2020 levels. In recognition of the drought, the Partnership and SRW transitioned 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.

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. The Restructured Agreement also provides that the WAC, by unanimous vote, can determine an alternate allocation methodology. On May 3, 2021, the WAC unanimously adopted a temporary allocation of water deliveries for July through October. 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 SRW will respond to achieve water demand reductions.

On May 14, 2021, Sonoma Water filed a Temporary Urgency Change Petition with the State Board requesting a reduction of releases from Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma to preserve critical water supply storage and seeking relief from requirements of their water rights for minimum instream flows in the Russian River.

On June 14, 2021, the State Board issued an Order granting those changes to Sonoma Water's operations. Additionally, the Order requires Sonoma Water to reduce their diversions from the Russian River by 20% over 2020 levels beginning July 1. To achieve this reduction in diversions, Sonoma Water allocated water to the water contractors using a temporary methodology for allocation of water deliveries approved by the WAC in May.

To meet these allocations, Stage 3 of the City's Shortage Plan was enacted by Council on July 29, 2021. Santa Rosa Water is currently implementing the mandatory demand reduction programs outlined in Stage 3 of the Shortage Plan, including enforcement of prohibitions and restrictions necessary to achieve the community-wide reduction target of up to 20% compared to 2020.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On May 18, 2021, the Council adopted a resolution instituting a voluntary 20% community-wide reduction in water use over 2020 levels. At that time, SRW staff notified the City Council that a recommendation for adoption of a mandatory stage of the City's Shortage Plan would be forthcoming once allocations were established by Sonoma Water.

On June 8, 2021, the Council held a public hearing and adopted the updated 2020 Shortage Plan.

On June 29, 2021 the Council adopted a resolution: 1) declaring a drought emergency, 2) adopting Stage 3 – Mandatory 20% Reduction in Water Use of the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan, 3) directing staff to implement the water conservation program as defined by Stage 3 to realize a community-wide water use reduction of up to 20%, and, 4) authorizing the utilization of Water Enterprise Catastrophic Reserve funds, if necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STAGE OF THE WATER SHORTAGE CONTINGENCY PLAN

1. The City's Shortage Plan details how the City responds during a water shortage. The Shortage Plan outlines eight rationing stages, overall demand reduction goals, consumption limits, prohibitions on water use, how violations of water use restrictions will be handled, the process for requesting variances, and monitoring procedures. In addition, the Shortage Plan includes a water shortage rate structure to compensate for loss of revenue due to reduced water sales and analyzes the revenue and expenditure impacts to the water utility.
2. On June 29, 2021 the City Council instituted Stage 3 of the City's Shortage Plan. Implementation of Stage 3 of the City's Shortage Plan aligns with Sonoma Water's water supply shortage for contract deliveries pursuant to the State Board Order beginning July 1, 2021.
3. Stage 3 of the City's Shortage Plan requires a 20% community-wide reduction in water use. Stage 3 requires compliance with the City's Water Waste Ordinance

which prohibits runoff or breaks or leaks in the irrigation systems; requires irrigation to be limited to the hours of 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM; prohibits washing of sidewalks, patios, and other hard surfaces unless needed to address public health and safety needs; requires hose-end shut off nozzles on all garden and utility hoses; requires restaurants to only serve water on request, and requires hotel and lodging establishments to message about the drought, including laundering of linens only upon request.

4. The City's Shortage Plan and Water Waste Ordinance detail the City's progressive enforcement program to address violations of water use prohibitions and the water waste ordinance.
5. SRW has contacted customers through an extensive multi-media campaign including targeted customer outreach, direct mailings, bill inserts, messaging on water bills and envelopes, and radio ads, as well as a robust digital campaign utilizing the City's website (srcity.org/SaveWater), social media accounts, and City Connections eNewsletter to notify them about the drought and the requirements and prohibitions of Stage 3 of the City's Shortage Plan. Our community is responding to the outreach, including increased call volume to the Water Use Efficiency Hotline, increased participation in rebate and incentive programs, and reductions in water use.
6. To assist customers in meeting the Stage 3 reduction in water use, the Water Use Efficiency Program is encouraging customers to take advantage of water use efficiency rebate and incentive programs; improve irrigation efficiency by using repeat start times, and adjusting their weekly watering based on our Water Smart irrigation recommendations; replace high flow water fixtures with high efficiency water fixtures; and request free Water Smart check-ups to receive recommendations for eliminating water waste and improving water use efficiency.
7. SRW is currently running several programs to meet the requested 20% reduction in water use, as follows:
 - a. To address runoff and water waste, Santa Rosa Water began implementing water waste patrols in May 2021, in addition to following up on reports of water waste from the public.
 - b. Water waste can be reported to the Water Use Efficiency Program through the water waste reporting website, www.srcity.org/waterwaste, or the Water Use Efficiency Hotline, 707-543-3985.
 - c. To implement water on request in restaurants and lodging industry requirements, Water Use Efficiency staff directly contacted the affiliated industries and customers, including short-term rental units, and provided information and resources.
 - d. To address irrigation limitations, SRW provided outreach and education regarding the new restrictions on outdoor irrigation to all customers.
 - e. To assist customers in tracking water use, Santa Rosa Water launched the WaterSmart Portal providing customers the ability to track and analyze water use online.
 - f. In addition to offering many other water use efficiency rebate programs, Santa Rosa Water's Green Exchange Program provides per

square foot rebates to customers for replacing their turf with low water use landscapes. To encourage additional participation during this drought emergency, on June 12, 2021 Santa Rosa Water increased the per square foot rebate amount from \$0.75 to \$1.50.

8. Stage 3 of the Shortage Plan is to remain in effect as long as is necessary to address the shortage conditions related to deficits of normal deliveries of water from Sonoma Water.

FISCAL IMPACT

Reduction in water sales will result in a reduction in revenue to the Water Enterprise Fund. In preparation for drought conditions, the Water Department reduced the FY2021/22 water budget and corresponding revenue accordingly. There is sufficient fund balance to absorb this reduction in revenue during FY2020/21 and likely in FY2021/22. As authorized by the Council on June 29, 2021, Santa Rosa Water will utilize the Water Enterprise Fund Catastrophic Reserve, if necessary, to address any revenue shortfalls that can not be absorbed by the fund balance. There is no impact to the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This study session is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On May 6, 2021, the Board of Public Utilities recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution requesting a 20% community-wide reduction in water use through voluntary conservation measures. This is a study session to provide a review and receive information.

CONTACT

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