



## COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

### SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 5/3/2022

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**To:** Board of Supervisors, Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Department of Emergency Management, Sonoma County Water Agency

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Christopher Godley, 565-2052, Grant Davis, 547-1911

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisorial District(s):** All

**Title:**

Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Continuation

**Recommended Action:**

Continue Local Emergency Proclamation Due to Drought Conditions

**Executive Summary:**

On April 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed a local emergency due to drought conditions in the Sonoma County Operational Area. Critically low rainfall over the last two years has resulted in historically low water storage levels in the region's two water supply reservoirs and storage levels continue to decline.

The adverse environmental, economic, health, welfare and social impacts of the drought continue to pose an imminent threat of disaster, and threaten to cause widespread potential harm to people, businesses, agriculture, property, communities, the environment, wildlife and recreation in Sonoma County. Therefore, this item requests the Board of Supervisors approve a 60-day continuation of the April 27, 2021, proclamation of local emergency.

**Discussion:**

Water Supply Update

As of April 17, 2022

- Lake Mendocino

The water supply storage level at Lake Mendocino was 45,631 acre-feet, approximately 47 percent of the available water supply pool for this date. At this time last year, the water supply storage level at Lake Mendocino was 36,740 acre-feet, approximately 38 percent of the water supply pool for this date.

- Lake Sonoma

The water supply storage level at Lake Sonoma was 143,195 acre-feet, approximately 58 percent of the available water supply pool. At this time last year, the water supply storage level at Lake Sonoma was 152,282, approximately 62 percent of the available water supply pool.

As of April 17, 2022, the National Weather Service is forecasting precipitation the week of April 18, 2022.

Consequently, storage in both Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma is expected to increase over the next 7 days.

The U.S. Drought Monitor provides the location and intensity of drought conditions across the country. Currently, almost the entirety of Sonoma County and the surrounding North Coast Region is classified into the D3 category (Extreme Drought). This continues to be a worsening condition since the last Board update on drought conditions when the region was classified into the D2 category (Severe Drought).

On July 12, 2021, the Office of Administrative Law at the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) approved emergency regulations for the Russian River Watershed due to extreme drought conditions and very low storage at Lake Mendocino. The emergency regulations expire on July 12, 2022. Pursuant to the emergency regulations, the State Board issued approximately 1,500 orders curtailing pre and post 1914 appropriative water right holders and riparian claims in the Upper Russian River on August 2, 2021, and approximately 300 pre- and post-appropriative water right holders in the Lower Russian River on August 10, 2021, directing them to stop (curtail) their diversions. The orders allow recipients to file for an exception to divert for human health and safety needs. More information on the State Water Board's actions related to the Russian River is available at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian\\_river/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river/).

Based on water demand and water availability forecasts, the State Board announced a suspension to curtailments on the lower Russian River on October 21, 2021, and the upper Russian River October 22, 2021. The suspensions will remain in place until May 1, 2022. The Division will reassess demand and water availability forecasts in late April and will update diverters on the status of curtailments for the remainder of March.

On April 1, 2022 State Board staff issued new draft emergency regulations for the Russian River Watershed due to continued extreme drought in the region. State Board staff conducted a public workshop on April 14, 2022, to present the proposed drought emergency regulation for the Russian River Watershed. The regulation will be considered for adoption at the State Board meeting on May 10, 2022.

#### Current Water Supply Conditions & Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP)

On November 17, 2021, Sonoma Water filed temporary urgency change petitions (Petitions) with the State Board requesting the determination of the water supply condition, which establishes the minimum instream flow requirements be changed from cumulative inflow at Lake Pillsbury (located in the Eel River watershed) be temporarily changed to storage thresholds developed by engineering staff at Sonoma Water. On December 10, 2021, the State Board issued a Temporary Urgency Change Order (TUCO) approving the Petitions. The order expires on June 7, 2022. Currently, Sonoma Water anticipates filing new Petitions with the State Board in early May. However, due to uncertainties regarding Pacific Gas & Electric Company's operation of the Potter Valley Project this summer and changing storage conditions at Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma, Sonoma Water has not finalized the requested changes that will be contained in the Petitions.

#### Drought Resiliency Projects

##### *Drought Resiliency Planning Project*

Sonoma Water is leading multi-agency, countywide drought resiliency planning project to improve resiliency and minimize economic impacts from future droughts through an assessment and evaluation of the 2012-2014 and current drought. This project's first phase will establish a countywide programmatic framework and

create potential mitigation projects and actions for each Supervisorial District which could be used to seek and advocate for local, State, and Federal funding opportunities. The next phase of the project will be to implement these actions to improve drought resiliency across the County. This project would complement drought resiliency adaptation strategies described in Sonoma Water's Climate Adaptation Plan for areas that are not within the geographic and jurisdictional scope of that plan.

This project will do the following:

- (1) gather, consolidate, and analyse data on water system, environmental, economic, and social impacts from current and prior droughts;
- (2) evaluate the cause of impacts (bad aquifer, bad reservoir, no water system interties, etc.);
- (3) identify potential mitigation projects and actions that would reduce drought impacts for vulnerable populations and vulnerable areas/systems in each Supervisorial District while providing for some multi-district actions and projects; and
- (4) develop a coordinated legislative/funding strategy for pursuing prioritized projects and actions.

While this Planning Project would not directly implement immediate on-the-ground drought resiliency projects/actions, it will identify and prioritize discrete actions that would improve resiliency and enhance potential grant funding opportunities prior to the next drought.

Additionally, this project will develop an Operational Area Drought Response Plan designed to minimize drought impacts through improved agency coordination, enhanced procedures for monitoring drought conditions and early warning capability, improved assessment of drought impacts, and more effective response to drought emergencies. This component would be co-led by Sonoma Water and the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management and serve as an annex to the Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan.

#### *Santa Rosa Plain Wells Drought Resiliency Project*

On May 11, 2021, Sonoma Water and County staff presented an overview of the status of the drought in Sonoma County, and specific actions currently underway or planned by Sonoma Water and other County departments/agencies in response to the drought emergency. The Board directed Sonoma Water and County staff to return to the Board to seek authorization and funding to expedite design and environmental review for activating one of Sonoma Water's Santa Rosa Plain wells to assist in addressing drought impacts. On May 18, 2021, the Board approved a concurrent budget resolution providing \$400,000 of County contingency funds to support this effort.

The project is intended to bolster water supply reliability for Sonoma Water's water contractors, and address water shortages impacting the agriculture sector. In general, the Santa Rosa Plain Drought Resiliency Project (Project) consists of two phases:

- Phase 1 utilizes the county contingency funds and completes the necessary engineering, environmental review, and other activities needed to activate one of Sonoma Water's Santa Rosa Plain wells.
- Phase 2 involves developing the planning and pre-design activities necessary to seek state drought emergency funding to activate the remaining two Santa Rosa Plain wells, in addition to adding recharge capabilities via groundwater banking.

These collective activities are intended to result in increased drought resiliency by helping drought impacted communities and assist in longer-term groundwater management activities under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Sonoma Water staff have formed an internal team to coordinate its activities

and facilitate collaboration with partners in implementing the proposed Project.

Sonoma Water activated the Phase 1 well (Todd Road Well) in October 2021. Activation of the well makes available an additional 200,000 to 500,000 gallons a day (approximately) for residents and ranchers who have lost domestic water supply and need water for health and safety in areas experiencing severe water shortages. The Phase 1 well could also produce an additional 1 million gallons daily (approximately) for Sonoma Water's water contractors to help alleviate drought impacts to their customers.

Phase 2 efforts were initiated September 2021. The planning and preliminary design for the Phase 2 wells (Sebastopol Road Well and Occidental Road Well) was completed and an application was submitted to the California Department of Water Resources on November 18, 2021, for implementation funding. On December 23, 2021, DWR released the program's Phase 1 awards. Sonoma Water was awarded \$6,900,000 for the Santa Rosa Plain Water Supply Resiliency Project. Sonoma Water has contracted with an engineering consultant to provide the project's Phase 2 construction design, which was commenced in December. Testing and investigation of the existing wells has commenced and is currently informing the design of the Sebastopol Road Well. The implementation schedule for constructing the improvements needed for Phase 2 remains subject to the continuation of emergency drought conditions, and the potential impact of supply chain delays for equipment and material deliveries is still being assessed. Notwithstanding those uncertainties, Sonoma Water is currently targeting re-activation of at least one of the additional Phase 2 wells (Sebastopol Road Well) in the fall of 2022.

#### *Alexander Valley Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge Feasibility Study*

The Alexander Valley Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge (FloodMAR) Feasibility Study will assess the viability of Flood-MAR projects in the Alexander Valley to improve water supply reliability (drought mitigation), reduce flood risk, and enhance aquatic ecosystems. The feasibility study will include both desktop assessments and field investigations such as soil borings, geophysics, infiltration testing, and possibly monitoring well installation. The study will be supported by Sonoma Water's recently completed hydrologic and hydraulic model that simulates surface water flow and flood impacts in the Alexander Valley, in addition to any applicable hydrogeologic information made available to Sonoma Water through the USGS' ongoing study of the Russian River watershed. Potential locations for assessment will focus on agricultural lands and working landscapes such as refuges, floodplains, and flood bypasses. The Dry Creek Rancheria of Pomo Indians were recently awarded funding through DWR's Urban and Multi-benefit Drought Relief grant program to implement a FloodMAR project within Alexander Valley. Sonoma Water staff are coordinating with the tribe and its partners to leverage resources and incorporate study and monitoring activities into the scope that support and inform their project where common goals and objectives can be achieved.

#### Environmental Resources Drought Activities

Sonoma Water staff continue to meet weekly with staff from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to discuss Russian River fish distribution, fish habitat and water quality conditions.

Per the December 21, 2021, TUCO, Sonoma Water crews continued to monitor spawning activity, river depth, and fish passage conditions at sites in the upper and lower Russian River when river flow was low this past winter and spring. Those surveys found steelhead spawning in the upper Russian River but many tributaries were inaccessible to fish due to a lack of precipitation this spring. Sonoma Water biologists recently

completed counting fish and nests on smaller tributary stream throughout the watershed on April 15. Those surveys revealed the highest number of endangered coho salmon returning to spawn in more than a decade. Unfortunately, the number of steelhead returning to those tributary streams was low and the hatcheries at Warm Springs and Coyote Valley dams recorded their lowest annual total of adult steelhead in more than two decades.

It appears that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will achieve their steelhead egg collection goal at the Coyote Valley Fish Facility. The low return of adult to Warm Springs Hatchery, however, likely means that less steelhead will be produced than normal this year. The production of juvenile coho salmon at Warm Springs Hatchery was also less than expected - a result of drought conditions last summer. Hundreds of thousands of one-year old steelhead smolts destined to enter the river were released this past winter and early spring. Tens of thousands of year old coho smolts are being released into the river this month.

In late March and early April, biologists from Sonoma Water and the University of California Sea Grant Program installed downstream migrant fish traps in the mainstem river at Mirabel Dam and in several tributary streams including Dry Creek, Mill Creek, Porter Creek, Mark West Creek, Dutchbill Creek, Green Valley Creek, Willow Creek, and Austin Creek. Until the recent series of storms, catches of downstream migrating juvenile fish (smolts and fry) have been low due to lack of streamflow. Numbers of fish are on the rise with the recent rains and catches of juvenile Chinook salmon in the mainstem trap at Mirabel have been greater than average for this time of year. The traps will be operated, flow permitting, through June.

Sonoma Water and Regional Board staff met in April to discuss monitoring measures for the 2022 dry season. Water quality is being monitored in Lake Mendocino and conditions will continue to be discussed during the weekly meetings with the State Water Board, NMFS, CDFW, and the Regional Board.

#### Public Outreach

The Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership's (Partnership) spring outreach campaign continues to emphasize that the drought has not ended. October's heavy rains and a wet December were followed by three dry months and continued dry conditions. To better illustrate the ongoing drought conditions, the weekly water supply infographic published online and in print in The Press Democrat newspaper has been updated to show current water supply levels in Lakes Mendocino and Sonoma as compared to the same date in 2020 and 2019 (<https://www.sonomawater.org/current-water-supply-levels>). The updated graphic now demonstrates the multi-year drought by showing consecutively lowering water supply years and drives home the likelihood of continued drought without significantly above average rainfall.

The Partnership campaign's online, print, and social media advertising also continues to provide tips and information about ways to save water at home, with a continued emphasis on indoor water conservation and tuning up outdoor irrigation systems during the spring months. Water bill inserts have been developed and shared with partner agencies to encourage the installation and use of rainwater capture and greywater systems, and to take action to remove lawns, fix leaking toilets, and consider water-efficient appliances. In addition, the 15 and 30-second video commercials in English and Spanish that were created for regional online television placements in December 2021 are being repurposed for website and social media outreach. The ads show low reservoir levels to emphasize the continued drought conditions and the need to save water. These videos were redeployed for regional television placements in April 2022.

The Partnership's website now contains a video library (<https://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/video-library/>) for water saving resources such as greywater webinars, presentations on drought gardening tips, business water saving tips, and more. Although the current number of recordings is modest, work is underway to expand the selection to include care and prioritization of trees during drought, the water saving and climate benefits of carbon gardening, and other related topics, with the goal to continually expand the offerings and build a regional following for this resource site. The website homepage has also been updated to include information on the statewide water waste prohibitions now in effect, and also a feature section for the Eco-Friendly Garden Tour which will take place on May 14, 2022.

A weekly social media campaign during the months of April and May will focus on inspecting irrigation systems and developing everyday habits to save water, including an emphasis on leak detection and repair both indoors and outdoors.

#### Interagency Drought Task Force

Sonoma Water staff, in coordination with the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management, continue to support and facilitate the Sonoma Interagency Drought Task Force to provide multi-agency, multi-discipline coordination and information sharing through the duration of the drought. The task force meets, as needed, and has over forty participating agencies representing local, state, regional, and tribal partners. The Task Force is currently being updated to reflect the updated requirements from SB 552 and will expand to include representation from small community water system (<3000 customers).

#### Agreement for Emergency Water Service

On November 2, 2021, the Board approved an agreement between the County of Sonoma and California American Water (CalAm) for the drought relief program for potable water. This program intends to supply immediate potable water for health and safety purposes in the upper Russian River region.

Since approval of agreement, the State Water Board temporarily suspended previous diversion cutbacks on the Russian River with the increased precipitation from recent storms. There has been no request for the drought relief program from rural residents with water insecurity to support health and safety with the current rainfall.

Department of Emergency Management (DEM) continues to work with Sonoma Water and coordinate support efforts, while Transportation and Public Works (TPW) has the drought potable water program active in contingent mode and will continue to monitor.

#### Continuance of Local Emergency Proclamation

As required by Government Code section 8630, the Board must review the proclamation of local emergency every 60 days and determine if there is a need for continuing the local emergency. Due to the ongoing adverse impacts of the drought, staff recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve continuation of the April 27, 2021 Proclamation of a Local Emergency Due to Drought Conditions in the Sonoma County Operational Area for an additional 60 days.

#### **Prior Board Actions:**

March 1, 2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration

Continued

January 4, 2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration

Continued

November 2, 2021: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration

Continued. Board authorized the Director of the Transportation and Public Works Department to execute the Agreement for Emergency Water Service with California-American Water Company until October 1, 2022

September 14, 2021: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration

Continued

July 20, 2021: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration

Continued

June 18, 2021: Board of Directors approved emergency drought response actions including adopting a resolution making findings of a need to perform emergency work without bidding to protect health, property and essential public services; and delegating authority to the General Manager of Sonoma Water to take actions necessary pursuant to the restructured agreement for water supply. □

June 8, 2021: Board received drought conditions update and continued the April 27, 2021 local emergency proclamation due to drought conditions.

May 18, 2021: Board adopted a concurrent budget resolution providing \$400,000 of contingency funding to support Santa Rosa Plain Drought Resiliency Project.

May 11, 2021: Board received an update on current status of drought conditions and adopted a concurrent resolution urging a 20% voluntary reduction in water use and other specific actions.

April 27, 2021: Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution Proclaiming a Local Emergency to Drought Conditions in the Sonoma County Operational Area and Requesting the Governor to Seek a Presidential Declaration.

#### **FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 21-22 Adopted</b>	<b>FY22-23 Projected</b>	<b>FY 23-24 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>			

#### **Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

None.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

None.

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None