



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-0475, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Counsel

Staff Name and Phone Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Proclamation of Local Emergency Due to Drought Conditions in the Sonoma County Operational Area

Recommended Action:

Adopt Resolution Proclaiming a Local Emergency to Drought Conditions in the Sonoma County Operational Area and Requesting the Governor to Seek a Presidential Declaration.

Executive Summary:

Due to critically low rainfall over the last two years, water storage levels are at historic lows in both of the region's two water supply reservoirs, Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino. Most critical is Lake Mendocino currently at 43 percent of water supply storage capacity with a real threat of going dry this year. Lake Sonoma's water supply capacity is currently 62 percent, the lowest on record for this time of year.

This potentially historic drought in Sonoma County may result in broad impacts and considerations that extend beyond drinking water and conservation efforts. The local agricultural system, the County's wholesale and retail water responsibilities, general county operational practices, tourism, fire services and prevention, conservation messaging and practices within the community at large, maintenance of environmental health, protection of vulnerable ecosystems, and consideration of the public's health are all important aspects of the County's drought response. In some instances, such as local agriculture, the drought has created a critical emergency with significant crop loss and costs to local producers.

On March 5, 2021, the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture designated 50 California counties, including Sonoma County, as primary natural disaster areas due to drought. This Secretarial disaster designation makes farm operators eligible to be considered for certain assistance from the Farm Service Agency.

On April 21, 2021, Governor Newsom visited Lake Mendocino and proclaimed a state of emergency due in Sonoma and Mendocino counties due to drought conditions in the Russian River Watershed. This item recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt a local emergency proclamation due to the adverse environmental, economic, health, welfare and social impacts of the drought which 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 the County of Sonoma. Due to the potentially historic impact of this drought, this item also recommends that the Board of Supervisors request that the Governor seek a Presidential Declaration of Disaster.

Staff will return to your Board on May 11, 2021 to provide a situation update, including efforts to date and additional actions for your Board’s consideration to address this emergency situation.

Discussion:

California as a whole, and the Russian River Watershed in particular, is in the second consecutive year of extremely dry conditions due to historically low rainfall totals. Rainfall and water storage are well below average for this time of year. The 2019-2020 (October 2019 - September 2020) water year was the third driest water year on record over the last 127 years. To date, rainfall totals for the current water year are merely 38 percent of average for Santa Rosa, and 39 percent for Ukiah. Lake Mendocino currently at 43 percent of water supply storage capacity, with a significant threat of going dry this year or being so low that releases cannot be made. Lake Sonoma’s water supply capacity is currently 62 percent, the lowest on record for this time of year.

The attached Resolution proclaiming a local emergency due to drought conditions covers the entire Sonoma County Operational Area, including all nine cities and special districts. Under California’s Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), the County will serve as the lead agency for mutual aid and coordination with these jurisdictions and the State through the California Office of Emergency Services. With this proclamation, additional coordination at the Operational Area will occur to help identify what actions and resources are needed to address broad community impacts, particularly to local agriculture.

The proclamation creates a greater suite of opportunities to support the region’s local agriculture and economy. For example, additional funding requests for drought related response activities and public outreach may become available that can assist the agricultural community, mitigate the increased fire risk, and streamline mitigation projects to protect and preserve drinking and agricultural water supplies. Although not currently available through the Governor’s Proclamation, future reimbursement for emergency response and coordination activities may later become available through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). The CDAA would allow for reimbursement up to 75% of costs incurred under a locally proclaimed emergency. The attached Resolution requests the Governor immediately authorize CDAA reimbursement and also requests the Governor seek all available Federal disaster assistance, including a Presidential Declaration of Emergency. The proclamation also requests that the Governor waive regulations that may hinder response and recovery efforts.

Staff will return to your Board on May 11, 2021 to provide a situational update, including information on efforts to date and additional actions for your Board’s consideration to address this emergency situation.

Prior Board Actions:

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			

General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

Resolution

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