



Legislation Text

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

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

Staff Name and Phone Number: Christopher Godley, 565-1152, Grant Davis, 547-1911,

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory 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 August 10, 2022

- Lake Mendocino

The water supply storage level at Lake Mendocino was 49,289 acre-feet, approximately 62.8 percent of the available water supply pool for this time of year. At this time last year, the water supply storage level at Lake Mendocino was 19,105 acre-feet.

- Lake Sonoma

The water supply storage level at Lake Sonoma was 123,682 acre-feet, approximately 50.5 percent of the available water supply pool. At this time last year, the water supply storage level at Lake Sonoma was 115,493 acre-feet, approximately 49.6 percent of the available water supply pool

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 D2 category (Severe Drought).

Russian River Watershed Emergency Regulations

On May 31, 2022, the Office of Administrative Law at the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) approved revised emergency regulations for the Russian River Watershed due to severe drought conditions and very low storage at Lake Mendocino. The emergency regulations expire on June 1, 2023. Through the emergency regulations, the State Board has the authority to curtail pre and post-1914 appropriative water right holders and riparian claims based on water availability analyses being prepared by State Board staff. The orders allow recipients to file for an exemption 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 issued orders regarding curtailment status to all right holders in the Russian River watershed on June 14, 2022. It orders appropriative right holders and those with riparian claims to monitor an online curtailment status list that will be the mechanism for notifying individuals that their right or claim has been curtailed.

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

On May 25, 2022, Sonoma Water filed temporary urgency change petitions (Petitions) with the State Board requesting the water supply condition for the Russian River be changed from Normal Dry Spring to Critical. This would reduce the minimum instream flow requirement on the Upper Russian River from 75 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 25 cfs and on the Lower Russian River from 125 cfs to 35 cfs. The request was based on very low storage levels in both Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino. On June 17, 2022, the State Water Board issued an order approving Sonoma Water's request to change the water supply condition to Critical. The new order expires on December 13, 2022. In response, Sonoma Water began reducing releases from both Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma to meet the new minimum instream flow requirements. Similar to last year, Sonoma Water is required to reduce its Russian River diversions by 20 percent from July 1 to October 31 compared to the same period in 2020, or until flows at Hacienda Bridge are at or above 125 cfs.

In addition, on July 27, 2022, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued an order approving a flow variance request filed by Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) for the Potter Valley Project, which has significantly reduced imports of Eel River water into the East Fork Russian River.

Ongoing Drought Resiliency Projects

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 the 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 assisting 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 on their customers.

Phase 2 efforts were initiated in September 2021. The planning and preliminary design for the Phase 2 wells (Sebastopol Road Well and Occidental Road Well) were 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 have commenced and is currently informing the design of the Sebastopol Road Well. A construction contract has been executed to commence the installation of piping needed at the Sebastopol Road Well in order to meet current regulatory requirements for disinfection as part of

reactivating the well. The implementation schedule for completing 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 the re-activation of at least one of the additional Phase 2 wells (Sebastopol Road Well) in the fall of 2022.

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. In late March and early April 2022, 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. With declining flow in the tributaries, the downstream migrant trapping season ended in June 2022 for all streams except Dry Creek. Compared to historical averages, the catch of coho smolts has been low. Chinook salmon smolt counts are also below the historical average in Dry Creek but smolt numbers at the mainstem trap below the Mirabel Dam fish ladder have been closer to the historical average. Sonoma Water biologists are monitoring water quality conditions in Lake Mendocino, the mainstem Russian River and the estuary utilizing permanent and seasonal data sondes that record water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and salinity (at some sites). Grab samples are also being collected to monitor nutrients and pathogens in the mainstem and estuary. Staff are monitoring algae and cyanobacteria conditions in the mainstem Russian River and sharing observations of conditions with Regional Board staff. Water quality conditions will continue to be discussed during the meetings with the State Water Board, NMFS, CDFW, and the Regional Board.

Drought Response and Flood Control Coordination Project

On July 12, 2022, your Board approved one full-time, limited-term Program Manager each for Sonoma Water and Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management (DEM). These positions will coordinate long-term countywide drought preparedness along with the flood control coordination project. DEM and Sonoma Water staff have been collaborating on the next steps including defining position roles and responsibilities and will be bringing recommendations back to the Board for approval of the positions.

Current Public Outreach for Water Conservation and Drought Resources

The Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership's (Partnership) Drought is Still Here campaign continues to emphasize the critical importance of saving water this summer. A complimentary series of "How To" video shorts is currently being deployed to reinforce the summer ad messages appearing in online news publications locally. The early reporting metrics from this social media video campaign indicate the Spanish language posts as being the top performers. In addition to paid social media placements, the "How To" videos have also been

added to the archive of video resources housed on the Partnership's website.

The Partnership's Saving Water Summer Pop-Up event campaign is also now in full swing, with the main event occurring at six locations in Sonoma and Marin counties from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on August 20. The event locations will provide free water savings resources and tips to those that stop by. Additional events will occur throughout the summer, with a complete list of locations and times available online at

www.savingwaterpartnership.org <<http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org>>.

The Sonoma County Fair is fully back in August 2022 after two years of COVID related limitations, and the Partnership is a proud sponsor of two water-wise garden awards in the Hall of Flowers for both the professional and amateur entrants to the Hall. Additional drought messaging has been placed throughout the fairgrounds providing water savings tips and reminders of the need to save water.

The Partnership's website continues to provide up-to-date drought resources, including links to each of the Partner's specific irrigation or other restrictions in effect and overall water use reduction goals. Information is also provided on the statewide water waste prohibitions in effect, with newly added information about the more recent statewide prohibition on the use of potable water for irrigation of non-functional turf in commercial, industrial, and institutional landscapes. This irrigation ban applies to ornamental turf plantings and not to sites used for recreation or other civic or community purposes, while also preserving the ability to water trees.

More complete information about this prohibition is available on the State Water Resources Control Board website (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/regs/emergency_regulation.html

<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/regs/emergency_regulation.html>). Lastly, the water supply infographic continues to be updated weekly on Sonoma Water and the Partnership's websites, as well as in print and online versions of The Santa Rosa Press Democrat newspaper.

Interagency Drought Task Force

Sonoma Water staff, in collaboration with DEM staff, are working to support and facilitate the Sonoma Interagency Drought Task Force to provide a forum for multi-agency, multi-discipline 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 revised to reflect the updated requirements from SB 552 and will expand to include representation from small community water systems and others.

Agreement for Emergency Water Service with CalAM

On November 2, 2021, the Board approved an agreement between the County of Sonoma and California American Water (CalAm) for a 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 the approval of the agreement, there has been no request for the drought relief program from rural residents. Transportation and Public Works (TPW) has the drought potable water program active, and with no active

users, continues to monitor potable water needs in upper Russian River region.

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 recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the 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:

- 07/12/2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued. The Board of Directors adopted a concurrent budget resolution providing \$1,130,000 of contingency funding from the Water Security Fund to support a Drought Response and Flood Control Coordination Project.
- 05/03/2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued
- 03/01/2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued
- 01/04/2022: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued
- 11/02/2021: 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
- 09/14/2021: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued
- 07/20/2021: Received Drought Conditions Update and Local Emergency Proclamation Declaration Continued
- 06/18/2021: 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.
- 06/08/2021: Board received drought conditions update and continued April 27, 2021, local emergency proclamation due to drought conditions.
- 05/18/2021: Board adopted a concurrent budget resolution providing \$400,000 of contingency funding to support the Santa Rosa Plain Drought Resiliency Project.
- 05/11/2021: Board received an update on the current status of drought conditions and adopted a concurrent resolution urging a 20% voluntary reduction in water use and other specific actions.
- 04/27/2021: 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

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 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:

None.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

None.

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

None