



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: October 14, 2014 REPORT NO: 14-064
ATTENTION: Council President and City Council
SUBJECT: Drought Response Level 2–Drought Alert Condition
REFERENCE: Environment Committee October 8, 2014 Meeting

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

1. Declare Drought Response Level 2 - Drought Alert Condition (Chapter 6, Article 7, Division 38, Section 67.3806 of the San Diego Municipal Code) effective November 1, 2014.
2. Adopt water use restrictions as part of Drought Response Level 2–Drought Alert Condition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approve the requested actions.

SUMMARY:

The Mayor is recommending implementation of a Drought Response Level 2–Drought Alert Condition per San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) Section 67.3806. The Mayor is making this recommendation based on: (1) the Governor's Declaration of Drought throughout the State of California; (2) that 2014 has been the driest year in a generation and the 4th driest year on record going back to the 1920's, and that; (3) water storage and groundwater levels throughout the state are alarmingly low.

BACKGROUND:

Calendar year 2013 closed as the driest year in recorded history for most areas of California, and the severe drought is continuing through the fall of 2014. The United States Drought Monitor identified on August 12, 2014, that approximately 82 percent of the state is in extreme or exceptional drought. Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., declared a drought state of emergency on January 17, 2014, and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. This declaration was followed by the adoption of emergency water regulations on July 29, 2014, by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). These emergency regulations consist of two main sections:

1. Water waste prohibitions applicable to all Californians; and
2. A requirement that water suppliers activate their drought response plans at a level that includes mandatory outdoor water use restrictions and report monthly on potable water production.

Compounding the lack of precipitation, this year has experienced unprecedented increases in temperature, causing increased demands for water by consumers. The first seven months of 2014 have been the warmest on record for California, according to the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center (CPC), and are predicted to be above average through October. The CPC also predicts that the chance of an El Niño Southern Oscillation weather event will decrease to about 65 percent during the fall and early winter. Historically, strong El Niño weather events can bring wetter than average weather to California, particularly to Southern California. Unfortunately, predictions at this time are for a weak El Niño.

Colorado River

As a result of extended dry conditions, continued demand for Colorado River water, and extensive depletion of groundwater basins, storage quantities and reservoir levels have decreased drastically since 2000. During this period, total system storage has fallen to 30.4 million acre feet (maf), or 51 percent of capacity. However, the 2014 water year (October 2013 to September 2014) to date is seeing improved conditions compared to recent years with precipitation, snowpack, and inflows to the Colorado River. To date, an official shortage has never been declared on the Colorado River for the Lower Basin. However, record-low water levels in storage coupled with the trending multi-year dry hydrology in the basin indicate increased probabilities of shortages in the next few years.

State Water Project

In April of 2014, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) established that the allocation of water deliveries from the State Water Project (SWP) would be only 5 percent – the lowest delivery level in its history. The SWP allocation in 2013 was 35 percent and over the last eight years, the average SWP allocation was a meager 42.5 percent. With little snowpack accumulation as of April 24, 2014, Governor Brown issued a second executive order to further strengthen the state's ability to effectively manage water and protect wildlife habitat in drought conditions. As of August 18, 2014, storage levels in the SWP's major reservoirs are well below average for this time of year, at 47 percent of average. The good news for Southern California is that MWD was able to largely replenish its water storage levels in 2013, providing a much needed buffer against SWP shortages in 2014. However, MWD has been quickly drawing down its reserves in order to meet current demands. Absent sufficient precipitation in the SWP watersheds this winter, MWD will consider enacting water delivery restrictions to its member agencies by the spring of 2015. MWD is currently at approximately 49 percent of its available water storage capacity.

Groundwater

Groundwater accounts for about 40 percent of the state's water use in an average year and 60 percent or more during a drought. After consecutive dry years, many wells across the state have gone dry. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) satellite images show the drastic loss of groundwater over the last dozen years. Since 2011, the amount of water removed from the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River basins each year adds up to 4 trillion gallons.

San Diego Region

On July 24, 2014, the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) declared a Drought Alert condition and implemented the Supply Enhancement Stage of its Water Shortage and Drought Response Plan. This declaration signals to the CWA's 24 retail member agencies the need to

implement mandatory water use restrictions at the customer level. CWA reservoirs are currently at approximately 37 percent of its storage capacity. The City of San Diego implemented a (voluntary) Level 1 - Drought Watch within its service area on July 1, 2014, to add to the permanent restrictions already in place. City reservoirs are holding at roughly 44 percent of their storage capacity.

DISCUSSION:

The City of San Diego was most recently in a Level 2 - Drought Alert Condition from June 1, 2009 through May 26, 2011.

The City's "Emergency Water Regulations" (SDMC Section 67.38) is a comprehensive document to secure water savings at all times. A specific section of the code, Section 67.3803 "Water Waste Prohibitions" lists rules that are in effect at all times. Prohibitions are synopsized as follows:

1. No runoff or excessive irrigation;
2. Car washing only in a commercial car wash or using a hose with shutoff nozzle or a bucket;
3. No watering of paved areas;
4. No non-recirculating decorative water fountains;
5. No overfilling swimming pools and spas;
6. Repair leaks upon discovery or within 72 hours of notification;
7. New buildings must recycle cooling system water and car wash water;
8. Restaurants will only serve and refill water upon request;
9. Hotel guests must have the option of not laundering towels and linens daily; and
10. No watering after 10 am and before 4 pm (winter)/before 6 pm (summer), with some exceptions.

On July 1, 2014, the Mayor and City Council invoked SDMC Section 67.3805 "Drought Response Level 1 – Drought Watch Condition." This section is voluntary and is meant to achieve a 10 percent reduction in water consumption. Drought Watch is summarized as follows:

1. Landscape irrigation limited to three assigned days per week;
2. When watering without an irrigation system a shut-off nozzle or garden hose sprinkler system on a timer is required;
3. Washing vehicles limited to the same schedule as irrigation (except for: boats which may be washed after use; vehicles with health/safety issues; at a commercial carwash that recycles water);
4. Use recycled or non-potable water for construction purposes;
5. Fire hydrants for firefighting only;
6. Construction operations can use water from a fire hydrant meter or water truck only as required by regulatory agencies; and
7. Irrigation is not permitted during rain event.

Due to the aforementioned ongoing drought within the State of California, the Mayor is recommending the City of San Diego invoke SDMC Section 67.3806 "Drought Response Level 2 – Drought Alert Condition." Under the Alert condition all previously listed voluntary

conditions listed under Drought Watch become mandatory. Additional restrictions are summarized as follows:

1. Sprinklers limited to 10 minutes in warm months, 7 in cool months;
2. Watering without an irrigation system limited to 3 assigned days;
3. Stop operating ornamental fountains except for maintenance;
4. Potted plants and food plants must also be irrigated before 10 am and after 4 pm (winter)/after 6 pm (summer) on any day; and
5. Irrigation is allowed in certain extreme situations.

Under a Drought Alert condition, the Mayor and Council may choose to suspend water use restrictions under Level 1 and Level 2 and instead implement a water allocation per customer account along with a schedule of surcharges or penalties for exceeding the water allocation.

CONCLUSION:

Based upon the above, it is recommended that the City move to Level 2 – Drought Alert Condition.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

None with this action. The Public Utilities Department will utilize existing budget and existing resources to enforce and educate the community about the Drought Alert restrictions.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS:

This action will be noticed pursuant to SDMC Section 67.3809. Further, the Department has an enhanced outreach effort in place, including budget for television and radio spots, which will provide widespread messaging on the Drought Alert restrictions.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS:

All customers of the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department will be required to comply with the City's Drought Response Level 2 – Drought Alert Condition. Expected impacts from these water conservation efforts are additional water use reductions over and above the City's already low water use.

Respectfully submitted:



Halla Razak
Director of Public Utilities



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