

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: July 15, 2008 REPORT NO: 08-114

ATTENTION: Council President Scott Peters and Members of the City Council,
Council Meeting of July 28, 2008

SUBJECT: Declaration of Water Emergency (Stage 1. Voluntary Compliance-
Water Watch)

REFERENCE: Municipal Code Sections 67.3801 - 67.3811

REQUESTED ACTION:

Find and Determine that a water shortage could exist based upon the occurrence of the following condition: "a general water supply shortage due to increased demand or limited supply," pursuant to Municipal Code section 67.3803(a).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Request

SUMMARY: The Mayor, based on the recommendation of the City's Water Department, has determined and is declaring that a water emergency exists within the City of San Diego pursuant to Municipal Code Section 67.3801. The Mayor recommends that the City Council, pursuant to Municipal Code section 67.3803 find and determine that a water shortage could exist based upon the occurrence of the following condition: "a general water supply shortage due to increased demand or limited supply," pursuant to Municipal Code section 67.3803(a).

The Mayor, based on the Water Department's recommendation, is declaring and implementing a Stage 1 – Voluntary Compliance - Water Watch pursuant to Municipal Code Section 67.3806.

The Mayor is making these declarations based on: (1) the historic dry conditions in the regions from which San Diego imports its water (2) the judicial actions limiting the movement of water through the Bay-Delta to Southern California (3) the need to increase conservation to meet current-year demand goals (4) the increased consumption of customers over the past three months (5) the Governor's Declaration of Drought Emergency throughout the State (6) the need for increased public awareness to ensure every opportunity to conserve water voluntarily is provided.

BACKGROUND: The City of San Diego is located in a semi-arid climate with an average annual rainfall of 10 inches. This rainfall provides only 10 – 15% of the water needed to meet local demands. As a result, the City purchases 85-90% of its drinking water from the San Diego County Water Authority, which in turn imports water from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Water provided via this supply chain originates from both the Colorado River and from the San Francisco Bay-Delta region of Northern California. A 242 mile-long aqueduct brings Colorado River water from Lake Havasu to the Southland while the 444 mile-long California Aqueduct carries water south as part of the State Water Project. Recent environmental changes and judicial actions have placed strains on these water supply sources.

The region's water supplies remain impacted by extremely dry conditions around California over the last year that significantly reduced storage in key reservoirs, as well as by an eight-year drought in the Colorado River basin. The Northern California snow pack is 67% of normal, while runoff is forecasted to be 55% of normal, making this the driest spring on record for Northern California. The Colorado River Basin system is also at 50% of capacity.

In addition to environmental stresses, court-ordered pumping restrictions on the State Water Project, designed to protect threatened fish species, went into effect in December 2007, cutting water supplies from the Bay-Delta to 25 million Californians who live from the Bay Area to San Diego. Already this year, pumping restrictions have resulted in the loss of nearly 800,000 acre-feet of water statewide. Of that figure, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, from which the County Water Authority purchases the majority of its imported water supplies, has lost approximately 250,000 acre-feet due to Delta smelt pumping restrictions. At this point it is not clear how long these restrictions will be in place, but it is expected that the timing and amount of pumping will continue to restrict southern California water supplies for the next several years.

In light of these actions, the City, in close cooperation with its wholesalers, has continued to evaluate current-year water demand and supply requirements and has taken a leadership role in proactively calling for increased conservation by all its water customers. As a member of the County Water Authority, the City has supported the enhanced \$1.8 million public education campaign to increase public awareness regarding the current supply situation. The City has led the call for all customers to cut back usage by 20 gallons per day as part of the County-wide "20 Gallon Challenge." The Mayor continues to promote and emphasize the critical and ongoing need for increased water conservation in the City. The Mayor has, and will continue, to communicate the need for water conservation and opportunities to reduce water consumption for commercial, industrial and residential water customers throughout the City.

Initial demand figures indicated that City water customers were indeed conserving at the start of the "20 Gallon Challenge." Through January, customers had saved 4,290 acre feet below the average last two years' consumption levels. However, this success was short-lived, as conservation by City water customers since February has decreased to only 106 acre feet below the last two-year average for the same time period. Overall, customers have saved 4,396 acre feet since the beginning of the "20 Gallon Challenge," representing a reduction of 3% over historic levels.

While both the Metropolitan Water District and the County Water Authority have reaffirmed their ability to meet projected demands through the end of Calendar Year 2008, it is clear that without additional conservation through the remainder of this year, particularly the months of July, August, September, and October the region's water supply will be increasingly strained. Current-year water supply forecasts have identified the need for 56,000 acre feet of additional conservation for the region served by the County Water Authority by the end of December 2008. The County Water Authority has reported that as of June 30, only 20,000 acre feet have been saved by its member agencies.

There is also increasing awareness that improving the water supply situation requires enhanced efforts throughout California. On June 4, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state-wide drought emergency, which was aimed at facilitating water transfers, developing a state drought water bank for Calendar Year 2009 and providing more funding for immediate water conservation efforts. However, many of these actions will take time to put in place, putting greater emphasis on the need for the public to immediately reduce their water consumption in order to meet current year goals. These are the current changes that now mandate a determination that a water emergency exists and a declaration of Stage 1-Voluntary Compliance-Water Watch. The City will continue to monitor the water supply situation and provide regular updates.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: None with this action.


PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTION: None.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: This action will be noticed pursuant to Municipal Code Sections 67.3811. It will be noticed in community newspapers, on the City's Web page, and within the bills received by water customers.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: All customers of the City of San Diego Water Department.

 7/14/08

Alex Ruiz
Assistant Water Department Director

 7/17/08

J.M. Barrett
Director of Public Utilities

Attachments: San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 6, Article 7, Division 38: Emergency Water Regulations

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