

May 7, 2015

Honorable Terry Tornek  
Mayor, City of Pasadena

Pasadena City Council

Mr. Michael Beck  
City Manager, Pasadena

**Re: Water Conservation and Drought**

Dear Mayor Tornek, Pasadena City Council, and City Manager Beck,

It is important Pasadena demonstrate leadership by showing how a midsized California city can meet the challenge of our drought with thoughtful, innovative, environmentally sensitive water programs and projects. I suggest three issues and approaches be included to meet the current and future needs of our city: environmental concerns, reclaimed water, demonstration projects at Washington Park. Pasadena's actions to meet this challenge will determine if we can still consider ourselves to be, as we claim, a "GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE CITY."

Water is essential to our lives and the environment in which we live. It is important that we begin by considering our use of water rather than arbitrary, potentially harmful reductions. Adequate staffing of the relevant City Departments with well trained and supervised staff is essential. Public education is essential to gaining consumer participation.

The appropriate use of water for public and private landscaping has been emphasized through much of the media discussion, but the emphasis has been on cutting and not how to best apply this valuable resource to protect our environment.

**TREES** are an important part of our environment in Pasadena, doing much more than contributing to the beauty of our City. Their loss would be a serious blow to the quality of Pasadena's environment. They clean the air of pollutants; remove climate changing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere; cool and shade our City, reducing the need for energy gulping air conditioning; provide essential habitat for birds and other wild life. The conservation plan must provide for protection of our existing trees, and perhaps changes in our City's tree plan to provide for the replacement of water-loving trees with more drought resistant species when necessary.

The complexity of this issue is demonstrated by our native oak trees, which should have been watered during the winter according to their normal adaptation to

our environment. Proper care of trees on private property also requires public education and training of gardeners and others who maintain that valuable protected resource.

**LAWN REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS** must include public education and controls to ensure that projects are installed appropriately for permanence and at the appropriate time if they are to achieve water savings goals and enhance our City's environment.

1. Lawns slated for replacement should be identified as soon as possible.
2. The owners should discontinue watering as soon as Water Conservation employees can verify the area to be included in the program and allow the grass in those areas to die back while saving water this summer.
3. Planting should commence in the fall, for newly planted drought-resistant plants require frequent water through the dry months until they are established. New plantings do not save water until they are established.
4. As those of us who help maintain the landscaping in Washington Park know, non-lawn areas require more knowledge and hand labor than mow and blow gardeners provide mechanically. The city should provide training to gardeners serving residences to enable them to provide new services and sell those enhanced services to their customers.  
Noisy, polluting leaf blowers will raise more dust from dry soils and are not appropriate for landscapes where deep mulch has replaced lawns.
5. Customers and the City must be protected against incompetent or dishonest contractors, seeking incentives. Remember the solar water heater programs of 40 years ago? I challenge you to find any of those subsidized units still operating.

**RECLAIMED WATER IS AN ESSENTIAL WASTED RESOURCE.** A dozen years ago, while I was on the Utility Advisory Commission, the City was on the verge of beginning the connection to the Los Angeles-Glendale Water Reclamation Plant to provide water to Brookside Park, especially the golf course. This first step was to be followed over the next decade with a distribution system for reclaimed water to the east side of the City.

I do not know to why the City dropped the ball on this money and water saving project. Perhaps it was fiscally short-sided budget balancing. But this wasted water could be one of the most important sources to meet Pasadena's goals to meet the water shortage created by the drought. Perhaps State money could be used to expedite this important project.

1. Since even the first part of this long-delayed project could not be finished by this summer, emergency procedures should be considered to use

this wasted water. Perhaps a temporary terminal could be built at the end of the existing pipeline at the City boundary to fill trucks, that could carry the water to help preserve the City's drought endangered trees. This high energy solution should only be used until a permanent distributions system is constructed. I do not know how much of the design was completed before the project was delayed.

2. The City should develop programs to encourage residents to install gray water and storm harvesting systems. They should oversee these programs to insure that customers are not exploited by incompetent or dishonest contractors attracted by the incentives.

**RUNOFF RECOVERY AND OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS PROJECTS AT WASHINGTON PARK.** The Washington Park General Plan calls for daylighting the seasonal stream (Woodbury Creek) that is now piped through the park, and creating a native riparian space in the park.

This project including necessary filtration and other facilities would not only enhance the park, but would also demonstrate the use of urban runoff, an important wasted resource in our drought plagued state.

Washington Park's beautiful native plant landscape, is one of the best drought tolerant demonstration gardens in Pasadena. More City resources should be put into maintaining this beautiful park and incorporating it into public education efforts to teach Pasadenans about the value and care of drought tolerant native landscapes.

These plantings should become a model for other public places in Pasadena. City employees need more training and supervision to maintain these landscapes, Washington Park is also a good place to locate that training as well as public education efforts.

Organizations such as the California Native Plant Society and the Theodore Payne Foundation, may be good sources of training expertise.

Sincerely,

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