

# Agenda Report

April 17, 2023

**TO:** City Council

**THROUGH:** Municipal Services Committee (April 11, 2023)

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT: IMPLEMENT LEVEL 1 WATER SUPPLY SHORTAGE PLAN AS DESCRIBED IN PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE ("PMC") TITLE 13, CHAPTER 13.10; AND LIFT THE TEMPORARY 15 PERCENT VOLUNTARY WATER-USE REDUCTION TARGET (WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT)**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the action recommended herein is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15307 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources) and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances; and
2. Adopt implementation of the Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan pursuant to Pasadena's Water Waste Prohibitions and Water Supply Shortage Plans Ordinance (PMC Chapter 13.10) and lift the temporary 15 percent voluntary water-use reduction target.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMMARY:**

Following three years of record dry conditions, recent storms brought record precipitation to California this winter, helping to dramatically boost water supplies available via the State Water Project – a major source of water for the region. While these storms helped relieve near-term drought impacts, many groundwater basins throughout the State have been severely depleted and the Colorado River – another major source of water supply for the region – remains challenged with reservoir levels at historic lows.

On March 24, 2023, Governor Newsom eased some drought restrictions, while maintaining others to support impacted communities across the State. The order includes ending the statewide voluntary 15 percent water conservation target, while continuing to encourage that Californians make conservation a way of life; and ending the requirement that local water agencies implement level 2 of their drought contingency plans. These actions were taken as the State announced increased water deliveries from the State Water Project to 75 percent of requested water supplies, as compared to just 5 percent in each of the previous two years.

Pasadena was proactive in addressing intensifying drought conditions and activated Level 2 of the City's Water Shortage Plan on August 16, 2021, and also adopted a voluntary 15 percent water-use reduction goal. This early approach and active effort from Pasadena Water and Power ("PWP") customers led to a savings of over 2 billion gallons during unprecedented statewide drought conditions.

PWP continues to evaluate changing conditions, and with the recent significant improvement of water supplies in the State, staff recommends scaling back drought restrictions by moving to a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan and lifting the temporary 15 percent water-use reduction goal.

Although conditions in the State improved, it is prudent to have an ongoing water supply shortage plan in effect, as in-region groundwater storage and reservoirs on the Colorado River system remain severely stressed, and as California is vulnerable to extreme and variable weather. The State also continues to maintain the emergency drought declaration.

Under a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan, outdoor watering would be restricted to three days per week from April through October and one day per week from November through March.

PWP continues to promote a foundation of water-use efficiency for long-term water resilience.

**BACKGROUND:**

PWP's water supply sources include local groundwater from the Raymond Basin and imported water from The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ("MWD"). MWD supplies 26 member cities and water agencies with water from storage facilities, the State Water Project ("SWP"), and the Colorado River system.

## ***Managing Through Extreme Hydrologic Conditions***

### Unprecedented Drought Conditions Prior to this Winter

Over the past three years, California faced the driest years on record. The Colorado River basin continued to experience a historic extended drought, resulting in record low levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, which are the two largest reservoirs in the United States. Groundwater levels significantly depleted in many areas of the State.

Beginning in the fall of 2019, the SWP watershed had extreme low precipitation and runoff. Allocations to southern California for 2020, 2021, and 2022 dropped to historic lows of 20 percent, 5 percent, and 5 percent of contracted amounts, respectively. In 2022, for the first time in history, SWP supply was based on Human Health and Safety Needs (domestic supply, fire protection, and sanitation) rather than contracted amounts to allow regions that primarily only have access to SWP supply to meet basic needs.

In April 2021, Governor Newsom declared a drought emergency in certain counties, and within six months (October 2021), the declaration expanded to the entire State. In July 2021, the Governor called on Californians to voluntarily reduce water use by 15 percent over 2020 levels. As the drought continued to intensify, by the following summer, on June 10, 2022, the State Water Resources Control Board activated new emergency water conservation regulations requiring all urban water suppliers to implement Level 2 Water Shortage Contingency Plans and prohibiting the irrigation of non-functional turf with potable water for commercial, industrial, and institutional sites.

At that time, Pasadena was already on a Level 2 Water Supply Shortage Plan, as Pasadena City Council took early action to address drought conditions and implemented a Level 2 Water Supply Shortage pursuant to PMC 13.10.035 and adopted a 15 percent voluntary water-use reduction goal on August 16, 2021. Prior to August 2021 and since March 2017, Pasadena was under a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan, following the previous drought cycle.

### Recent Storms Helped Ease Drought Impacts

Recent winter storms completely shifted the water supply conditions in the SWP watershed from record dry to record wet. Nine atmospheric rivers through January 2023 allowed for an increased SWP allocation from 5 percent to 35 percent. With continued winter storms in March and a massive Sierra snowpack, the State recently announced a major increase in SWP deliveries to 75 percent, which is 15 times higher than the allocations in each of the last two years. Allocations may increase further with additional precipitation.

Although there have been dramatic improvements in the availability of SWP supplies, decades-long drought continues to affect the region's other source of imported water – the Colorado River. Groundwater supplies across the State have also been severely depleted in recent years.

Based on these conditions, on March 24, 2023, Governor Newsom eased some drought provisions while maintaining others. Actions included ending the voluntary 15 percent water conservation target, while continuing to encourage that Californians make conservation a way of life; ending the requirement that local water agencies implement level 2 of their drought contingency plans; maintaining the ban on wasteful water uses, such as watering ornamental grass on commercial properties; and retaining a state of emergency for all 58 counties to allow for drought response and recovery efforts to continue.

***Recommend Implementation of the Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan***

With significantly improved water supply conditions across the State, and in consideration of remaining water supply challenges facing the Colorado River system and local groundwater basins, staff recommends a moderate easing of irrigation restrictions by adopting the Level 1 Water Supply Shortage effective April 17, 2023. The Level 1 Water Supply Shortage (PMC 13.10.040) restricts outdoor watering to three days per week from April 1 to October 31, whereas the current Level 2 plan only allows two days per week during this period. Both Level 1 and Level 2 limit watering to one day per week in the winter months from November to March. The Level 1 plan, unlike Level 2, allows filling or re-filling of ornamental lakes and ponds.

Under the proposed Level 1 Water Supply Shortage, the following schedule for watering outdoor landscapes would apply to all residential and most non-residential customers:

Season	Even-Numbered Street Addresses	Odd-Numbered Street Addresses
April 1 to October 31	Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays	Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays
November 1 to March 31	Mondays only	Tuesdays only

PWP will continue to provide exemptions for irrigating trees and new water-efficient landscapes. PWP will also provide flexibility for customers who have large irrigation areas and active playing fields, provided they do not exceed watering more than 3 days per week.

***Recommend Lifting the Temporary 15 Percent Voluntary Water-Use Reduction Target***

Consistent with State actions, staff also recommends lifting the 15 percent voluntary water reduction target. While improved supply conditions allow for lifting these temporary targets that help meet the increased need to conserve water in severe drought conditions, a continued foundation of water-use efficiency is essential for long-term water resilience. PWP has long-term conservation goals adopted in its Water System and Resources Plan, along with an aggressive water conservation program.

### ***Outreach and Education***

PWP will provide robust customer outreach and education to raise awareness about the Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan through a combination of venues including:

- Website and Social Media
- Press Releases
- Citywide Direct Mailer
- News Articles through City/PWP Publications
- Direct Outreach to City Departments, Field Representatives, Large Customers, and Community Groups
- Emails to customers through the WaterSmart customer engagement tool
- Updates on the WaterSmart Customer Portal

PWP will also continue to closely monitor water supply conditions and provide updates to the Municipal Services Committee.

### **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The proposed actions are consistent with the 2020 Water System and Resources Plan, the 2020 Urban Water Management Plan, and the City Council Strategic Planning Goals to increase conservation and sustainability.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

The project has been determined to be exempt per Section 15307 of the CEQA Guidelines, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources. This exemption consists of actions by regulatory agencies as authorized by state law or local ordinance to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of a natural resource (such as water) where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the resource. Implementing the Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan are actions by the City of Pasadena's Department of Water and Power to protect and maintain water resources. There are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The cost of this action will be \$30,000 for outreach costs to ensure community awareness of moving to a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage Plan. Funding for this action will be addressed by the utilization of existing budgeted appropriations in the Water Operating Fund (402) Outside Printing and Duplicating Expense account string 49208170-811000. It is anticipated that \$20,000 of the cost will be spent during the current fiscal year. The actions are not expected to substantially change water sales or administrative costs associated with water conservation and waste enforcement activities. The anticipated impact to other operational programs or capital projects because of this action will be none.

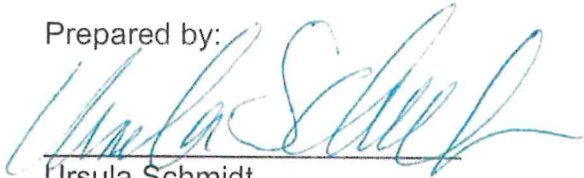
Respectfully submitted,



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