



## MEMORANDUM

FC 14 (01-02-07)

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Water Conservation and  
Demand Management  
Committee

**SUBJECT:** Water Conservation and Demand  
Management Committee Meeting Summary  
for April 12, 2021

**DATE:** April 27, 2021

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This memorandum summarizes agenda items from the Zoom meeting of the Water Conservation and Demand Management Committee held on April 12, 2021.

### **Attendees:**

Board Members in attendance were: Committee Vice Chair, Director Nai Hsueh-District 5, Director Barbara Keegan-District 2, Committee Chair, Director Linda J. LeZotte-District 4.

Staff members in attendance were: Aaron Baker, Glenna Brambill, Bart Broome, Justin Burks, Rick Callender, Theresa Chinte, Vanessa De La Piedra, Vincent Gin, Andy Gschwind, Jason Gurdak, Linh Hoang, Matt Keller, Karen Koppett, Metra Richert, Ashley Shannon, Kirsten Struve, and Gregory Williams.

Guest Agencies in attendance were: Diane Asuncion (City of Santa Clara), John Tang and Bill Tuttle (San Jose Water Company).

Public in attendance were: Doug Muirhead and William (Bill) Sherman.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **4.1 UPDATE ON 2021 WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

Mr. Justin Burks and Mr. Matt Keller reported on the following:

#### **Summary from Meeting Agenda Memo:**

Conditions in the State of California continue to be very dry, with much of Santa Clara County being classified by the U.S. Drought Monitor as being in moderate drought. On April 1, the Department of Water Resources snowpack survey shows the snowpack at 59% of normal. Therefore, it's important to review current conditions, raise awareness on local ordinances and best practices regarding efficient water use, and consider adjustment to Valley Water's Landscape Conversion Rebate amount.

#### **Current Conditions**

We began calendar year 2021 with groundwater storage within Stage 1 (Normal) of the Water Shortage Contingency Plan of Valley Water. On April 1, the Department of Water Resources snowpack survey shows the snowpack at 59% of normal. Consequently, dry conditions are impacting this year's water supply statewide. The current modeling shows that the end of year groundwater storage for 2021 is projected to be in the lower end of Stage 1. This projection reflects an assumed water use reduction of 15 percent in 2021 and a less than average recharge program of 75,000 AF in 2021. Staff is seeking to purchase supplemental imported water supplies and will provide a water supply update to the full Board on April 27, 2021.

#### **Water Conservation Program**

##### **Ordinances and Best Practices**

In 2018, California established a foundation for long-term improvements in water conservation and drought planning commonly referred to as Making Water Conservation a California Way of Life" (AB 1668/SB606). Valley Water staff is engaged with the statewide effort in developing the specific regulations and efficiency standards associated with that plan. The State has also adopted key provisions prohibiting the wasteful use of water that many of the cities and Water Retailers in Valley Water's service area have already adopted.

Some city water waste ordinances are consistent across service areas, such as the prohibition of irrigation runoff or irrigating within 24 hours of measurable rainfall. Other ordinances vary depending on the water retailer's active

stage of their respective Water Shortage Contingency Plans, for example, irrigating more than 15 minutes per irrigation station per day is not required at this time in all service areas.

In addition to the State-wide requirements and city water waste ordinances, Valley Water's Water Waste Inspector Program provides a mechanism for community members to report water waste violations. This educational outreach service informs residents of the nature of the water waste report, and of Valley Water rebates and services that could help resolve or correct the issue. Though this program lacks enforcement power, staff coordinates with water retailers to help resolve persistent reports or to engage with property owners that are not receptive to Valley Water's outreach. Some water retailers have their own water waste enforcement programs as well, including San Jose Water Company and City of Palo Alto Utilities.

In addition to the Water Waste Inspector Program, Valley Water's [Find Your Water Retailer](#) webpage provides direct links to each water retailer's water waste rules, tips, and best practices to inform the public on how to avoid the inefficient use of water.

Best practices of the efficient use of water are recommended to be highlighted as part of Valley Water's outreach efforts in the months ahead to remind the community of the importance of installing water-wise landscaping and upgrading to efficient irrigation, reading their meter to track their water use and look for leaks, and returning to shorter showers, ideally, 5-minutes.

### **Landscape Conversion Rebate**

Valley Water continues to promote our many conservation programs, saving nearly 75,000 acre-feet of water in the last fiscal year. Valley Water continues to work towards achieving long-term water conservation savings goals of 99,000 acre-feet of water per year by 2030, and 109,000 acre-feet of water per year by 2040, as established in the Water Supply Master Plan 2040.

The Landscape Rebate Program (LRP) is integral to helping Valley Water meet its long-term savings goals. This program provides cost-effective short-term and long-term savings, visual reinforcement of positive water-saving actions, and multiple environmental benefits with a single, online application process for customers. In April 2014, LRP's Lawn Conversion Rebate was doubled to \$2/sq. ft., which resulted in a multi-year trend of increased participation in all of LRP's incentives. Specifically, conversion of landscape to being water wise rose from 160,500 sq. ft. in FY 2013 to 345,500 sq. ft. in FY 2014, ultimately peaking at 5.4 million sq. ft in FY 2016.

According to initial results of an analysis in support of the Water Conservation Strategic Plan update, the cumulative participation represents less than 5% of county-wide residential parcels. Even as the rebate rate returned in \$1/sq. ft. in June 2016, participation remained high and is at nearly twice the pre-drought levels today. When the rebate amount increased, over 25 additional support staff (i.e., interns, temporary staff, temporary re-assignment/rotation, and permanent hires) were required immediately to process applications, rebates, provide customer service, coordinate with retailers, and provide additional administrative support for ongoing reporting, budget oversight, and supervision of additional staffing.

Valley Water plans to utilize approximately \$700,000 a year of Safe Clean Water Measure S funding in fiscal year 2022 and 2023 to increase LRP's Landscape Conversion Rebates once again to \$2 sq. ft. and increase the maximum rebate from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for single-family homes. Furthermore, Valley Water will expand its partnership with a local nonprofit organization, Our City Forest, to offer the Lawn Busters Program to low-income community members, US veterans, and other disadvantaged community members. Valley Water will also utilize this additional funding to offer educational services, which will include the development of multi-lingual educational videos to promote water conservation. With the rebate amount increase, additional staffing resources will be needed to support the conservation program. The additional resource needs will be brought to the board through the budget process.

### **Public Outreach and Campaign Efforts**

The current and planned public outreach will emphasize drought messaging and further expand efforts to promote Valley Water's many conservation and rebate programs, that support making water conservation a way of life in Santa Clara County. Valley Water's multilingual spring water conservation campaign runs from April 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021 and will highlight messages surrounding being drought-ready, such as *Is Your Yard Drought Ready? Our rebates can help make the change.* The advertising mediums include multilingual digital ads, print advertorials in community newspapers, multilingual social media posts, multilingual videos, and multilingual radio ads. Media outreach includes media advisories and media availability on water supply, conservation and infrastructure projects, including the Anderson Dam Seismic Retrofit Project and the Purified Water Project, board

columns for publications, and statements from the Chair on topical water supply news stories such as snow survey data and infrastructure reliability. Planned social media, blogs and Nextdoor posts will highlight conservation and rebate programs, investments in infrastructure and technology, and efforts to secure a safe, clean, and reliable water supply. Social media posts on conservation, drought preparation and infrastructure investments will be provided weekly. Valley Water staff will also work with retailers to share messaging.

The creation of new yard signs for the current spring campaign and development of additional signs for the upcoming summer campaign is underway. Staff is also developing the new summer campaign, which will focus on highlighting Valley Water's conservation programs.

When in-person community events resume, staff also will resume hosting Valley Water booths and the water truck at targeted events, where staff will conduct drought awareness outreach, including highlighting Valley Water's water conservation and rebate programs.

### **Next Steps**

An additional update on water conservation programs, outreach campaigns, the Urban Water Management Plan, Water Shortage Contingency Plan, and the annual Monitoring and Assessment Program will be provided at recommended early May 2021 Water Conservation and Demand Management Committee meeting.

The Water Conservation and Demand Management Committee discussed the following: partnering with nurseries, native plant societies, water savings, Rebate Program, lawn conversion, retooling of the application process, those that are already conserving, tailoring the message in different categories, low, middle, high water consumers (users), 20% current water conservation goal needs to be clearly communicated in the messaging.

Mr. Doug Muirhead commented:

1. Groundwater Modeling average recharge 75k AF and what it is compared to, well depths are affected equally
2. Great job with managing Groundwater basin and continue to remind people of relying on State/Federal allocation during drought and planning future forecasting.

The Water Conservation and Demand Management Committee took the following action by a roll call vote unanimously approved:

1. Support maintaining current voluntary call for conservation
2. Recommends the Board direct staff to increase water conservation messaging, programs to inspire additional water savings, and
3. The Committee also recommended the outreach messaging include the following suggestions since the messaging is being developed to tailor the message:
  - To those that are conserving vs those that are not, (what should be done if someone is not conserving),
  - Encourage those that are already conserving and what tools/suggestions for them to continue,
  - To be user-friendly,
  - That the 20% water conservation message mention the base year (2013 or other year)
  - Conservation goal objective be clear—whether a number of 15% or 20% is going to be used (or not).

The Water Conservation and Demand Management Committee will schedule a meeting the week of May 10<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me at, [gbrambill@valleywater.org](mailto:gbrambill@valleywater.org) or 1.408.630.2408.

Thank you!

Glenna Brambill, Management Analyst II,  
Board Committee Liaison  
Office of the Clerk of the Board

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