

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF July 31 - August 1, 2014

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ITEM NUMBER: 6

Drought Conditions Update by Regional Liaison to Water Rights Division

STAFF CONTACT: Lisa McCann 805/549-3132 or lisa.mccann@waterboards.ca.gov

KEY INFORMATION:

Location: Region-Wide
Type of Activities: Permitting, Interagency Coordination, Technical Assistance, Grant and Loan Funding

THIS ACTION: Board Discussion/Information/Direction

DISCUSSION

In response to the drought conditions in California and the Governor's declarations of a state of emergency due to drought, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) are working on many new projects and tasks to continue to protect beneficial uses and ensure provision of safe and adequate water supply. Most of the work is being implemented by the Division of Water Rights at the State Water Board, as that division has the responsibility and authority to regulate the amount of water provided for beneficial uses and per legal water rights. However, the Regional Water Boards are becoming more involved in tasks related to water rights to assist the State Water Board, given the high demand for staff resources under such extreme conditions. Additionally, drought-related tasks emerge through Regional Water Board permitting, groundwater and spill cleanup and investigations, interagency coordination (since we regulate municipalities for wastewater discharges who also provide water supply), and grant-funding outreach. Finally, some Regional Water Boards are proactively implementing drought-related tasks regionally to address drought-related problems and limited water supply and availability with their water quality authorities.

This report provides general information about the current projects and tasks that Central Coast Water Board staff is tracking or implementing due to the drought.

Regional Liaison to Water Rights Division

Lisa McCann, Environmental Program Manager and Section Manager for the Watershed Planning and Protection Section, is newly serving as the Regional Liaison to the Water Rights Division. In this role, Ms. McCann will do the following:

- Coordinate and provide information updates to the Central Coast Water Board and stakeholders regarding drought activities in the Central Coast Region
- Represent State Water Board staff, if needed, on local projects and to local agencies and stakeholders

- Facilitate stakeholders' needs with State Water Board activities and authorities to address and resolve local drought problems
- Coordinate and make Central Coast Water Board activities consistent with State Water Board activities, regulations and policies

Central Coast Water Board General Activities Related to Drought

The Central Coast Water Board website was recently updated to include a link to "Drought Year info" at the top of the home page, and a button labeled "Drought Info" was added to the banner at the bottom of the webpage, both of which link to the State Water Board Drought Year Water Actions webpage:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml

The link provides current information about actions the State Water Board has or will take to address drought issues, and has a link titled "File a Complaint:"

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/enforcement/complaints/index.shtml

This link provides an explanation of the types of water rights complaints that would be particularly helpful to the State Water Board, Water Rights Division regarding illegal diversions—those unauthorized or in violation of a specific permit or diversions that constitute waste and/or unreasonable use of water or cause adverse impact to public trust resources (such as fish and wildlife). The webpage also provides users with access to the CalEPA Complaint Form to use to file such complaints.

Central Coast Water Board staff has been instructed to refer people with complaints related to water use and diversions to this webpage and the complaint form.

The State Water Board is giving highest priority to these types of complaints when they are in critical watersheds that have had water rights curtailed due to drought conditions or in watersheds that have resident endangered species.

The Central Coast Water Board has received such complaints, alleging people are filling trucks from creeks and rivers in Cayucos, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz County. For these cases, Central Coast Water Board staff either referred the person complaining to the Division of Water Rights and the complaint form or contacted State Water Board staff in the Division of Water Rights directly.

Central Coast Water Board Activities Related to Communities with Critical Water Supply Conditions

Paso Robles

Central Coast Water Board staff has been tracking progress on management of the heavily over-drafted Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. Staff attended several public meetings between July and December of 2013. In consultation with Ken Harris, Executive Officer, Tom Howard, Executive Director of the State Water Board, sent a letter to the County Board of Supervisors in August 2013, informing them that the State Water Board may take on responsibility to manage these waters if a local solution cannot be reached. Since then, stakeholder groups joined to urge Assemblyman Katcho Achadian to sponsor a bill to form a water management district; the specific key groups were the Paso Robles Agricultural Alliance for Groundwater Solutions, representing agricultural property owners, and PRO Water Equity, representing winery and vineyard owners, olive growers, other agriculturalists and rural residents who overlie the basin.

On July 7, 2014, the two water groups that proposed forming a management district for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin announced they are withdrawing their support for AB 2453, the bill that would help create the district. The groups asked the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors to take the lead in analyzing the amendments and working to form the water district. The groups' change of position was prompted by amendments made to the bill after it was approved by the Assembly on May 28 and had moved on to the state Senate. The amendments included changing the formation of a district from a weighted vote based on the amount of acreage owned to an equal vote by all landowners and details about how the water district would be managed, charge fees for extraction, and otherwise implement groundwater management.

In the meantime, the County of San Luis Obispo continues to implement the Urgency Ordinance the Board of Supervisors adopted on August 27, 2013, which established a moratorium on new or expanded irrigated crop production, conversion of dry farm or grazing land to new or expanded irrigated crop production, and new development dependent upon a well in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin unless such uses offset their total projected water use by a ratio of 1:1. The ordinance also required the installation of meters on new wells associated with the above uses, specified uses that are not subject to the ordinance, and contained exemptions including replacement wells for any of the prohibited uses. The Urgency Ordinance will expire on August 26, 2015.

Central Coast Water Board and State Water Board staff continues to closely monitor the progress by local organizations to manage the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin in order to consider whether and how the State might intervene to protect the basin.

Cambria

Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) is currently in the process of designing, permitting, and constructing an emergency water supply project to address its diminishing community water supply. According to CCSD staff, the community's water supply will be exhausted sometime between October and December of 2014 if significant rain isn't received by then. CCSD staff is proposing to design and construct a brackish-water reverse osmosis water treatment system to replenish groundwater through direct injection.

As a result, the CCSD may be seeking two different waste discharge requirements (WDRs) orders from the Central Coast Water Board: 1) WDRs specific to the reinjection of recycled water subject to Title 22 drinking water standards and 2) WDRs for a surface impoundment (evaporation pond) that would receive reverse osmosis reject subject to Title 27 solid waste disposal standards. The CCSD continues to work with the Division of Drinking Water (formerly California Department of Public Health) to be recognized as a community vulnerable to acute drinking water shortages due to drought, which may alleviate some permitting and administrative burdens.

In addition, Central Coast Water Board staff has been working closely with CCSD and has done or is doing the following:

- Contacted the Coastal Commission to facilitate its support for the project
- Contacted the new State Water Board Division of Drinking Water to facilitate identifying Cambria as a community vulnerable to acute drinking water shortages
- Identifying short-term and long-term environmental impacts relating to the proposed project
- Facilitating submittal of the future permit applications
- Preparing to review the reports and issue the draft WDRs immediately upon receipt of applications

- Preparing for a hearing by the Central Coast Water Board in November 2014, with the anticipation that the project would be online shortly after WDR issuance. If timing becomes critical the Executive Officer may request the Board Chair convene a special Board Meeting to approve any necessary permits.

Los Osos

Los Osos water purveyors Los Osos Community Services District (LOCSD), Golden State Water Company (GSWC), and S&T Mutual Water Company (S&T) and the County of San Luis Obispo released the Public Review Draft Basin Plan for the Los Osos Groundwater Basin on August 1, 2013, as part of an adjudication of water resources in the basin (court ordered in 2008). Central Coast Water Board staff reviewed the basin plan and provided comments to these organizations on October 22, 2013. Members of the public also commented on the basin plan, shared those comments with the Central Coast Water Board, and requested action by the Central Coast Water Board to further protect the groundwater basin. Central Coast Water Board staff is scheduled to meet with the purveyors and the County in August to evaluate their progress implementing the basin plan and consider actions the Central Coast Water Board may take in response to the on-going and serious water quality conditions of seawater intrusion in the lower aquifer and high nitrate in the upper aquifer.

Santa Cruz Area

The Soquel-Aptos Groundwater Basin is a source of water for several municipal water providers and numerous private well owners in Santa Cruz County. This basin is in a serious state of overdraft and contamination by sea water intrusion has been detected at the coastline, although not in drinking water wells yet.

The Soquel Creek Water District is working to reduce pumping by 35% and is coordinating with the County of Santa Cruz and surrounding water providers (including Central Water District which supplies Aptos, and the City of Santa Cruz) to seek coordinated actions to protect the groundwater basin. For example, the district is considering a water exchange with the City of Santa Cruz; City of Santa Cruz surface water could recharge the groundwater basin in the short-term and then the City could pump additional water in the future. Soquel Creek Water District is also evaluating desalination (on a regional basis with north Monterey County) and recycled water for irrigation and groundwater replenishment.

Santa Cruz is also considering a water exchange with the Scotts Valley Water District; in this exchange, recycled water from Scotts Valley could be used to irrigate the Pasatiempo Golf Club in the summer in exchange for potable water delivery from Santa Cruz to Scotts Valley Water District in the winter. The Scotts Valley Water District is considering using a quarry as a site for potential recharge for multiple agencies in the region. The San Lorenzo Valley Water District implemented an emergency intertie project (with Proposition 50 funds) that was originally planned to allow connections between separate water systems of multiple suppliers in the Santa Cruz area to share water supply resources. The project was scaled back but will connect the separate water systems within the district. The project began in June 2014 and is expected to be completed in February 2015.

The Lompico County Water District was identified by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in January 2014 as one of the seventeen rural drinking water systems in the state most at risk to run out of drinking water. The Drinking Water Program (formerly of CDPH and now a Division of the State Water Resources Control Board) will work with these systems to implement conservation, identify additional sources, and provide guidance on construction of additional facilities. San Lorenzo Valley Water District installed an emergency pipeline to deliver water to Lompico, which lost water resources this month (groundwater due to a faulty pump and motor and Lompico Creek due to extremely low levels).

All of these water districts and municipalities have declared water shortage emergencies to increase conservation and implement water use restrictions.

Central Coast Water Board staff met a few times in the winter of 2014 with the districts and municipalities in the Santa Cruz area to learn more about solutions to the groundwater and water supply conditions and to determine if Central Coast Water Board staff could facilitate any actions of the State Water Board to address the local issues. The districts and municipalities are coordinating to determine local solutions and are now working directly with the State Water Board Division of Water Rights to put emergency actions into place (e.g., water rights transfers, changes in location of diversions, and urgency changes to reduce release amounts as currently required in permits).

Santa Barbara Area

Central Coast Water Board staff attended the Santa Barbara County Drought Task Force meeting on May 30, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to inform participants of the status of the drought and water supply conditions, 2) discuss funding options for facility improvements and contingency actions, and 3) visit Lake Cachuma, Bradbury Dam, and the Tecolote Tunnel. Lake Cachuma is the primary surface water source (augmented with State Water) for about 200,000 people in southern Santa Barbara County, including the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Montecito, and Carpinteria. The Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board (COMB) is a joint powers agency with responsibility to operate and maintain Cachuma facilities and deliver water to the south coast of Santa Barbara through the Tecolote Tunnel.

The Central Coast Water Board issued COMB a Water Quality Certification in May 2014 to authorize drought-related work. The project included 1) removal of sediment obstructing the lowest-level intake-tower gate to allow water at the current low lake levels to flow into the tunnel and 2) installing an emergency pumping system (on a barge in the lake) to accommodate forecasted conditions suggesting the lake levels may fall below the lowest intake gate (so they can pump lake levels up into the lowest intake-tower gate if necessary). The work on this project is occurring now and will be completed before September when they anticipate needing to start pumping in order to deliver water.

In addition, Santa Barbara County has purchased about 4,000 additional acre-feet of water and is implementing a conservation campaign (public outreach). One acre-foot of water is approximately 325,800 gallons, the amount typically used by a suburban family household annually.

Monterey Peninsula

Central Coast Water Board staff attended the Monterey County Inter-Agency Drought Task Force Meeting on May 29, 2014. The meeting included a discussion of 1) available funding and 2) status reports from water districts and providers. All of the districts and providers in this area are implementing conservation and many are implementing assessment or actual projects to secure new supplies (e.g., desalination, recycled water or other means of increasing groundwater recharge in the winter).

The newest effort in this area is the Pure Water Monterey: a Groundwater Replenishment Project (GWR). In support of a sustainable, diverse water supply for the Monterey Peninsula, the [Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency](#) (MRWPCA) has formed a partnership with [American Water Company](#) and the [Monterey Peninsula Water Management District](#) in proposing a Groundwater Replenishment Project (GWR Project). The groundwater replenishment project would recharge the Seaside groundwater basin with high-quality purified water. The GWR Project is in advanced planning stages and has been expedited to be online by

the fall of 2016. Funding will be provided by grants, project partners, and water users on the Monterey Peninsula.

Central Coast Water Board staff will track development of this project and watch for opportunities to provide assistance.

Conclusion

Given the severity of the drought and the high volume of work in response for the State Board Division of Water Rights, Central Coast Water Board staff will continue to track drought-related activities and issues in the region and provide assistance to stakeholders and the State Water Board as needed. Additionally, Central Coast Water Board staff will take drought conditions and impacts to beneficial uses and water quality into account as we continue to conduct permitting, groundwater and spill cleanup and investigations, interagency coordination and grant-funding outreach or other business affected by the drought.