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## S T A F F   R E P O R T

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**DATE:**     February 26, 2009

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED WATER CONSERVATION & WATER SUPPLY  
SHORTAGE ORDINANCE**

**FROM:**     Linda Homscheid, Public Information/Strategic Planning

**FISCAL IMPACT:**   ✓None at this time. (However, once approved, implementation of conservation plans and public outreach will be funded within the 2008-09 budget)

**BACKGROUND:** Today, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which supplies most of the potable water to our region, is receiving very little water from Northern California due to in part to drought and pumping restrictions to protect endangered fish. Normally, half of Metropolitan's water originates there.

At this time, the majority of water supplied by Metropolitan is from the Colorado River, a source that will likely never increase due to long-term drought and the booming population in the Southwest.

As early as July 1, Metropolitan could start rationing water -- most likely up to a 20% reduction.

Approximately 20% of South Coast Water District's water comes from local sources: potable water from the groundwater recovery facility (~10%) and recycled water for irrigation from the advanced wastewater treatment plant (~10%). However, the balance or 80% of the District's water is supplied by Metropolitan.

**SUMMARY:** In anticipation of water rationing, Metropolitan Water District has asked local water providers to review, update and consolidate their existing water conservation ordinances and water shortage plans. Using Metropolitan's model ordinance, South Coast Water District is in the process of doing so.

A key feature in our proposed ordinance is 20+ Permanent Water Conservation Measures that residents and businesses would be required to practice throughout the year. These measures are designed to optimize water-use efficiency even when there is no water supply shortage.

For example, two proposed, permanent measures are: (a) don't water when it's raining and (b) limit watering to the hours of 5 pm to 9 am to minimize evaporation and maximize soil absorption. These practices are among the biggest outdoor water-savers and, if faithfully applied, could make a considerable dent in outdoor water use in our service area – which accounts for 50% of all water used.

A top indoor water-saving measure is to fix leaky toilets. Toilets typically use 1.3 to 3.5 gallons per flush. However, a leaky toilet can waste up to 100 gallons per day or 6,000 gallons per billing period. This adds an extra 8 units of water to a customer's bill and an estimated \$25 in unnecessary charges due to water waste.

The ordinance also details three levels of District response to escalating water shortages. Depending upon the degree of rationing, the South Coast Water District Board could declare a Level 1 or 2 Water Shortage or a Level 3 Water Emergency. This would trigger additional water conservation measures for residents and businesses, over and above the permanent measures.

For example, if there were a 20% water shortage, the District Board could declare a Level 1 Water Supply Shortage which limits watering days to no more than three per week in the spring and summer months. The District would establish specific watering schedules by day and month for community members and conduct public outreach to notify residents and businesses.

The City of Dana Point and the District are discussing the provisions in the ordinance to assess how they might complement or support municipal goals designed to prevent ocean water pollution. For example, the provision "No excessive water flow or runoff from lawns, landscaping and vegetated areas" meets the District goal to save water and City goal to keep ocean water clean by reducing runoff.

In addition, the District is talking with local water providers to exchange conservation best practices and seek opportunities to coordinate ordinance development.

To date, the District Board has reviewed and commented on the proposed ordinance at two workshops and has received public comments and local press coverage. (Attached letter and e-mail from community members on proposed ordinance.)

## **TIMELINE**

- **Feb 26** - Board meeting 6 PM in Dana Point Council Chambers – Board review and direction to staff on "Potential Changes to Ordinance Provisions" (attached)
- **Week of February 23** - Revised Ordinance posted on SCWD website
- **Mid-March** - District will hold a Community Information Forum on the proposed ordinance in Dana Point and will secure public input and comments. The date, time and location to be announced and publicized.
- **March 26** - Board meeting 6 PM in Dana Point Council Chambers – Plan to hold public hearing on the proposed ordinance and for Board to consider for adoption.
- **May 28** - Board meeting 6 PM in Dana Point Council Chambers – Staff will present the ordinance implementation plan to the Board.
- **July 1** – The Municipal Water District of Orange County submits member agencies' ordinances and implementation plans to Metropolitan by this due date.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Board information and direction