



County Drought and Water Shortage Contingency Planning

Background

In May 2018, Governor Brown signed two water conservation bills into law – Assembly Bill (AB) 1668 (Friedman) and Senate Bill (SB) 606 (Hertzberg). The two-bill package requires water conservation and drought planning by urban water suppliers and agricultural water suppliers. It also requires the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to propose recommendations and guidance to address the drought planning needs for small water systems and rural communities. The new legislation requires water use objectives that will surpass the “20 by 2020” target (a 20 percent reduction in per capita water use mandated by the Water Conservation Act of 2009).

AB 1668 and SB 606 created new roles for DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board (the Board) related to county drought and water shortage contingency planning. As stated in Water Code Section 8, Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 10609.40), established water shortage planning requirements often did not cover small water suppliers and rural communities, nor did counties address water shortages in their general plans. The new legislation specifically called upon the State to improve guidance for drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities.

Per Water Code section 10609.42, DWR must identify small water suppliers and rural communities that may be at risk of drought and water shortage vulnerability by January 1, 2020. The Department and the Board must notify counties and groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) of those suppliers or communities that may be at risk within their jurisdictions. Further, by January 1, 2020, DWR must propose to the Governor and the Legislature recommendations and guidance relating to the development and implementation of countywide drought and water shortage contingency plans to address the needs of small water suppliers and rural communities. The Guidance must outline goals of the drought and contingency plans, and recommend components including, but not limited to:

- Assessment of drought vulnerability.
- Actions to reduce drought vulnerability.
- Response, financing, and local communication and outreach planning efforts that may be implemented in times of drought.
- Data needs and reporting.
- Roles and responsibilities of interested parties and coordination with other relevant water management planning efforts.

In formulating the proposal, the Department must use a public process involving state agencies, cities, counties, small communities, small water suppliers, and other stakeholders.

County Drought Advisory Group

In December 2018, DWR formed a project team with staff from DWR, the Board, and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and a 35-member stakeholder advisory group. The County Drought Advisory Group (CDAG) held 4 bimonthly meetings and 6 workgroup meetings. The CDAG met four times in 2019 and will submit draft recommendations to DWR management in September. Public review documents will be released in October.

The team will develop two products:

1. A list of the small suppliers and 'rural communities' which are at risk of drought and water shortage; and
2. A list of components that should be included in a Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP).

Staff from DWR's Water Use Efficiency Branch will brief the Commission on their findings and draft recommendations and guidance.

This is an informational item.

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