

**PLACER COUNTY  
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** David Boesch, County Executive Officer  
by John McEldowney, Program Manager, Emergency Services

**DATE:** February 4, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Drought Impacts and Actions by Placer County

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**ACTION REQUESTED**

Update the Board concerning the current drought situation in Placer County and actions taken or pending by various Placer County departments and other drought impacted agencies within the County.

**BACKGROUND**

Preliminary weather data indicates that calendar year 2013 was the driest year in California since 1878. This is in addition to 2012 also being a very poor year for precipitation. Due to this significant lack of rain over the last two years, and our water storage levels precipitously decreasing over this winter, Governor Brown issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency on Friday, January 17, 2014. This followed a US Department of Agriculture Secretarial Drought Designation for California, Arizona, and Nevada on January 15, 2014 which triggered a Small Business Administration declaration of Placer County as an Eligible Contiguous County which provides potential assistance through SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans. Currently, Placer County is in Drought Condition D3 or Extreme Drought as defined by the US Drought Monitor and Folsom Lake, a major water source for western Placer County, is at 17% of total capacity, and 34% of historical average capacity for this time of year.

**PRESENTATION**

The Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and Placer County department staff will present summaries of actions taken to date, and planned ongoing actions, to respond to drought conditions in Placer County and to meet State orders as detailed in the Governor's Proclamation. The presentation will include brief discussions from PCWA, the Agriculture Commissioner, Placer County Fire, Environmental Health, Facility Services, and the Office of Emergency Services.

- A. PCWA will hold a public hearing on February 6th at 2 p.m. at the PCWA Business Center in Auburn to consider declaring a water shortage emergency in western Placer County. The agency's goal will be to implement water reduction actions that preserve water supplies in order to meet essential needs of public health and safety,

fire protection, and protect permanent agriculture crops. The agency is expected to authorize actions to supplement water supplies where possible and at the same time to implement a plan to dramatically curtail water use by all PCWA irrigation and treated water customers served by its Western Water System.

- B. The Agricultural Commissioner hosted an agriculture water supply meeting with the Nevada Irrigation District, Placer County Water Agency, and the South Sutter Water District in a meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup>. The Commissioner is also attending PCWA Board of Directors meetings and communicates regularly with staff regarding specific agricultural issues and communicates with individual growers to help them navigate through hardship requests to respective water districts. Further, the Commissioner advocates for agricultural producers whose water supplies are threatened to the point of putting them out of business and surveys growers to determine key drought impacts. Finally the Commissioner coordinates and plans assistance opportunities between the Resource Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the University of California Farm Advisor.
- C. Cal Fire/PCF has increased staffing due to the drought conditions that have created essentially a second winter fire season; eliminated water training events to conserve water; accelerated Defensible Space inspections so that they will now begin in April as opposed to later in the year; and is in the process of developing a “Drought/Super Fire Season” plan in coordination with the Governor’s staff. This plan is in preparation for what could develop into a catastrophic summer fire season which could start much earlier than normal.
- D. The Division of Environmental Health will ensure that well drillers submit required groundwater well logs for newly constructed and deepened wells in a timely manner and provide notice of areas experiencing problems with residential groundwater sources. This task supports Governor Brown’s January 17, 2014 Proclamation Order number 12.
- E. Facility Services is implementing a system wide Drought Reduction Policy that is now reducing water consumption by 20% from last year’s baseline. This is a comprehensive action that covers both automated and manual irrigation systems, turf management practices that leads to decreased water usage, and a system wide tracking matrix that will provide accurate water usage reports from water agencies.
- F. Placer County Office of Emergency Services will host a Drought Task Force to monitor conditions through the coming months. The Task Force will be focused primarily on collecting and reporting information and proactively mitigating drought impacts when possible. The Task Force will be prepared to transition to an activation of the Emergency Management Organization if conditions warrant. Lastly, the Task Force will coordinate with City, Special District, and State and Federal agencies in support of long term recovery actions. The Office of Emergency Services is also coordinating closely with our Placer County Fire Safe Alliance as they implement a community outreach campaign with a special focus on fire prevention, hazardous vegetation awareness and assisting to publicize the Chipper Program.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact to Placer County as this presentation is informational only. However, it should be noted that potential response and impact costs to Placer County could be significant and adversely impact a broad spectrum of interests due to the nature of a drought emergency.

