

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

MARCH 1, 2022

AND SHEILA KUEHL

**Adopting Policies to Support Urban Water Conservation in Los Angeles County**

While recent storms have brought much needed rain and snowfall, dry conditions in Los Angeles County (County) and the State of California (State) are likely to extend to a third consecutive year. Recent updates and data on the state of the water supply to the County have only underscored the need for greater commitments and efforts to conserve water resources. Governor Newsom’s proclamation extending the drought emergency statewide and urging Californians to voluntarily reduce water usage remains in effect. To safeguard drinking water supplies, the State Water Resource Control Board recently adopted regulations to prohibit overwatering yards, washing cars without a shutoff nuzzle, hosing sidewalks, or watering grass within 48 hours after rainfall. Earlier this month, Governor Newsom proposed \$750 million in the State’s budget to support drought resilience and response.

On July 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion, [Supporting Urban](#)

MOTION

SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

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MITCHELL \_\_\_\_\_

[Water Conservation in Los Angeles County](#), introduced by Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Sheila Kuehl in response to the drought conditions, instructing the Chief Executive Officer, in coordination with the Department of Public Works, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Internal Services Department to report back to the Board on the following:

- Baseline water usage based on average of 2017, 2018, and 2019 annual usage data at top 100 County facilities;
- The percentage of water sourced from recycled water sources particularly for irrigation of large, landscaped areas such as golf courses;
- A summary of planned and recently completed water efficiency upgrades and the status of that work; and
- Recommendations on how to achieve a 15% reduction in water use as compared to the 2017-2019 baseline at County facilities that are in alignment with other County sustainability goals, such as preservation of the urban tree canopy.

The motion further directed the Department of Public Works to survey drought-related education and outreach efforts by local water agencies in unincorporated areas of the County, and report back with a plan to enhance these efforts through the Water for LA Program to reach the highest water users, and ensure that information on resources to support water efficiency upgrades reaches linguistically isolated communities.

In response to the motion, the Chief Executive Office submitted a [report](#) on November 24, 2021, providing recommendations to reduce unnecessary water usage in

support of community health and sustainability goals, as well as to improve the County's ability to track progress and identify specific areas with high water demand or water waste. The report's recommendations focused on non-recreational landscaping, County buildings, recreational facilities, investments in software data collection and tracking, and community policies to support long-term water conservation. Additionally, the Department of Public Works produced a supplemental report which recommended the County further utilize its Water for LA Program to outreach to constituents to help reduce water use and serve as a liaison to connect water agencies with available water conservation resources. The Water for LA Program and its accompanying [website](#) were established in 2019. Campaigns to date have focused on the topics of water conservation and then stormwater and urban runoff pollution prevention. However, the prolonged drought conditions warrant additional and broader-scale water conservation education, which has been validated by stakeholders involved to date in the County Water Plan development effort.

In November 2018, voters in Los Angeles County approved parcel tax Measure W, with approximately 70% of the vote. Through Measure W, the Safe, Clean Water Program provides local, dedicated funding to increase Los Angeles County's local water supply, improve water quality, and enhance communities. The program generates up to \$285 million each year to fund multi-benefit stormwater and urban runoff capture projects. To date, 78 infrastructure projects have been funded, which collectively provide a suite of drought-related benefits that will supplement current and future water usage conservation efforts to enhance regional sustainability:

- Capture stormwater from over 207,000 acres;

- Increase total 24-hr storm storage capacity by 3,667 acre-feet; and
- Increase annual average stormwater capture by 54,664 acre-feet.

Additionally, the Safe Clean Water Program is tasked with the development of various education programs that could serve as yet another forum to explicitly help coordinate regional drought messaging in conjunction with Water For LA.

Lastly, in December 2021, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla called on the U.S. Department of the Interior to prioritize \$8.3 billion in western water infrastructure funding for California projects that will promote preparedness and resiliency to climate-driven droughts. Additional messaging and concurrence with such prioritization could emphasize the needs for our state, and specifically LA County.

As climate change-induced droughts continue to threaten regional water supply, the County must commit long-term investments and continue to demonstrate its leadership in prioritizing water conservation at its own facilities in order to meet the numerous goals outlined in the OurCounty Sustainability plan and being further explored and developed in the County Water Plan.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors

1. Direct the Chief Sustainability Office, in coordination with County Counsel, the Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and the Internal Services Department, to return within 180 days with a draft Board policy for the Board's consideration that establishes permanent water conservation measures for outdoor water use at all County-owned properties, such as requiring water

efficient irrigation systems, multi-benefit landscape design, limits on washing of sidewalks and cars, banning non-functional turf, and other recommendations from the November 24, 2021 report back.

2. Direct the Department of Public Works to incorporate water conservation messaging during development of the Safe, Clean Water public education program, local workforce job training program, and school education programs.
3. Direct the Department of Public Works to advance the next Water for LA campaign to educate the public and foster more sustainable behavior and collaboration regarding the region's water resources. This next campaign, understood to be utilizing materials about the Journey of Water, should be launched promptly in 2022 and aim to help coordinate and facilitate regional drought messaging as identified as a critical need by stakeholders currently involved in the County Water Plan development process. The campaign should educate LA County residents in their language about the region's water supply sources, the journey water takes to reach the homes, businesses, and schools in our communities, and the integrated and collaborative process that they can engage in alongside meaningful water usage behavioral changes that ensure such supplies are resilient and sustainable.
4. Direct the Internal Services Department to report back in writing within 180 days with recommendations on implementing a water usage data collection and tracking tool for use by all County Departments, and priority County facilities to implement submetering to track indoor versus outdoor water usage, including resources necessary to implement these recommendations.

5. Direct the Department of Parks and Recreation to report back in writing within 180 days on resources needed to implement water conservation measures at their facilities as recommended in the November 24, 2021 report back, including repair of leaking infrastructure as identified in the Lakes Management Plan, pool covers, and priority sites for replacement of spray irrigation systems and implementation of smart meters.
6. Direct the Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts to identify and implement actions to increase water conservation and report back in writing on these measures within 60 days to the Board.
7. Direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations (CEO-LAIR) division, in coordination with the Department of Public Works, to send a five-signature letter to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI), with a copy of the letter to be sent to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation, in support of Senator Feinstein and Senator Padilla's effort to urge the DOI to prioritize California projects designed to counter extreme climate-driven droughts during implementation of the western water infrastructure funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
8. Direct the Department of Public Works to include water conservation and re-use priorities as part of Infrastructure LA, and to the coordinated work being developed for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

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