

City of Arts & Innovation

# City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: JUNE 14, 2022

FROM: RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT AND RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES DROUGHT RESPONSE

## **ISSUE:**

Receive an update on Riverside Public Utilities and Western Municipal Water District's response to the State Water Resources Control Board's emergency drought regulations.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council receive an update on Riverside Public Utilities and Western Municipal Water District's response to the State Water Resources Control Board's emergency drought regulations.

## **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

Due to persistent and extreme drought conditions, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-7-22 on March 28, 2022, directing the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to adopt an emergency regulation for urban water conservation.

The emergency regulation requires water providers to:

1. Implement Level 2 (10-20% reduction) demand reduction actions in accordance with their respective adopted 2020 Water Shortage Contingency Plans (WSCP)
2. Prohibit the use of potable water to irrigate non-functional turf (solely ornamental in use) in the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors

The regulation does not prohibit the use of water to the extent necessary to ensure the health of trees and other perennial non-turf plantings.

## **BACKGROUND:**

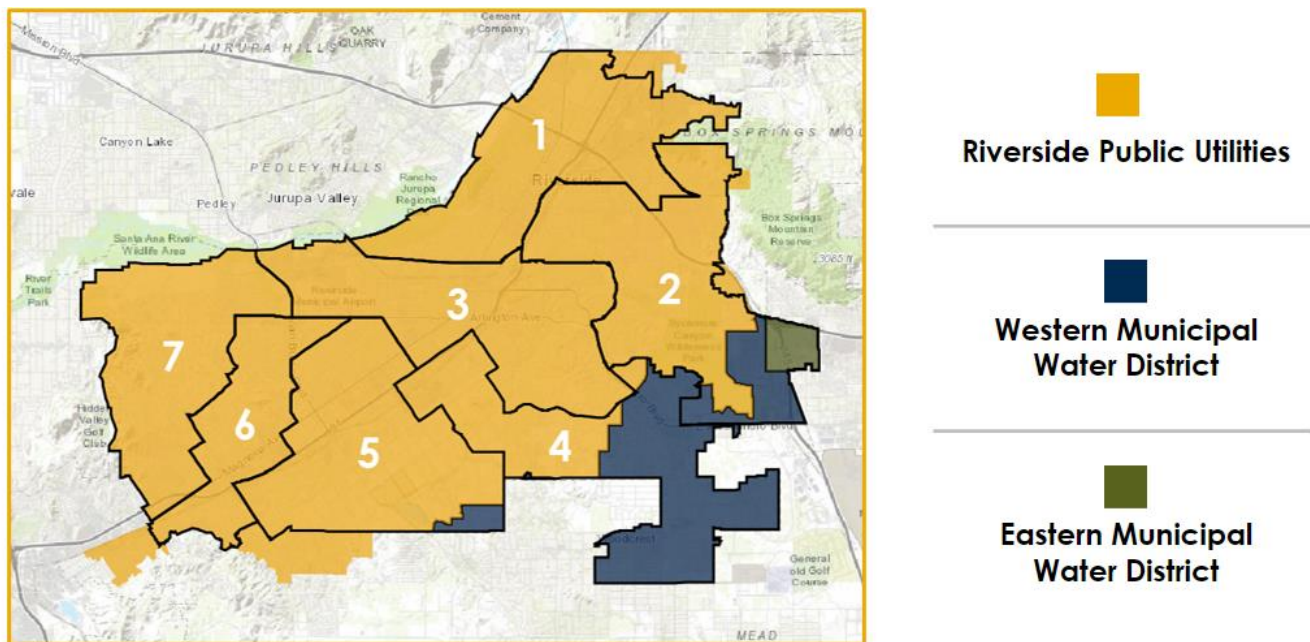
California is entering the third consecutive year of drought and the second severe drought within the last 10 years. During the 2012-2016 drought, the SWRCB established mandatory water

cutbacks to achieve a cumulative statewide water reduction goal of 25%. The mandate came with potential steep administrative civil liability fines for non-compliance. Regionally, RPU and Western Municipal Water District (Western) were given individual reduction targets of 28% and 32%, respectively. To achieve the mandated water use reduction targets, RPU enacted Stage 2 of the then adopted WSCP, while Western enacted their Stage 4B. The implementation of demand reduction actions and conservation outreach produced a 18% water use reduction for RPU and a 23% reduction for Western.

This time around, the State’s drought regulations do not come with the same steep administrative fines or quantifiable demand reduction targets most water agencies experienced during the last drought. The focus has shifted from meeting a percentage goal to the implementation of demand reduction actions that can help water suppliers achieve water savings if enacted. Specifically, water providers will be required to implement the demand reduction actions identified in each urban water provider’s Water Shortage Contingency Plans (WSCP). Additionally, the regulation calls for the prohibition of the use of potable water to irrigate non-functional turf in the commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) sectors.

**DISCUSSION:**

The City of Riverside (City) is served by three retail water providers. Most of the City’s residents receive water service from Riverside Public Utilities, but approximately 5% of the City’s residents are served by Western Municipal Water District.



This poses a communication challenge in the implementation of the State’s emergency drought regulations since shortage levels and corresponding demand reduction actions in a water provider’s Water Shortage Contingency Plan are specific to that water system. Western and RPU’s shortage stages enact similar, but not identical demand reduction actions. This may confuse some City residents, particularly in areas where our service boundaries meet. This report intends to provide information on the differences between Western and RPU’s contingency plan, as well as to describe the joint effort underway to communicate an aligned message to the residents of Riverside.

**Implementation of Shortage Level 2 (10-20%) - Water Shortage Contingency Plan**

A WSCP is a roadmap for how to proceed through various levels of water shortage. It contains pre-planned guidance, including protocols on how customers will be informed of an expected or actual shortage and demand reduction actions that will be asked of them. These contingency plans, including the demand reduction actions corresponding to the various shortage levels, are specific to each water provider to account for local conditions such as available water supply sources, constraints, and rate structure.

RPU is required to implement Stage 2 of its WSCP, while Western will remain in Stage 2 since enacting it in January 2022. Western’s Stage 2 calls for a 20% demand reduction, while RPU’s calls for 15%. Below is a summary of the most notable and impactful demand reduction actions that will be asked of customers in the two service areas. Other differences are not listed because they only apply to very specific situations (i.e., new construction). These differences will be made less significant as Western’s joint communication campaign with RPU will also recommend customers only water three times per week during the drought emergency. Watering only three times per week is a general best practice for maintaining landscapes and not expected to stress customers’ lawns.

Western Municipal Water District Stage 2   20% Reduction	Riverside Public Utilities Stage 2   15% Reduction
Automatic irrigation controllers adjusted	
Repair leaks timely	
Water features to recirculate water	
Irrigation run-off restricted	
Hose shut-off nozzles required	
Hosing off sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes prohibited	
RPU: Landscape water between 6 PM-10 AM Western: Landscape watering between 8 PM-8 AM	
<b>Landscaping watering 3x per week</b>	

**Joint Messaging and Customer Outreach**

RPU and Western are working on a joint outreach campaign to communicate the drought regulations and assist customers in using water efficiently, particularly outdoors where most water is used. Jointly, RPU and Western will call for customers to reduce outdoor irrigation to three times per week focusing on water waste prevention tips (e.g., using a shut-off nozzle when using a hose, eliminating irrigation run-off, sweeping instead of hosing driveways, etc.). Additionally, rebates and programs available to Western and RPU customers will be highlighted and promoted.

**Non-functional Turf Irrigation Ban for Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Sectors**

Targeted information will be provided for commercial, industrial, and institutional customers that are subject to watering restrictions per the State’s emergency drought regulation. Enhanced rebates and assistance programs on turf replacement particularly for non-functional turf are available and will be highlighted.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

The implementation of the SWRCB's emergency drought contributes to **Strategic Priority 4 - Environmental Stewardship** and **Goal 4.2:** Sustainably manage local water resources to maximize reliability and advance water reuse to ensure safe, reliable, and affordable water to our community.

This project aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Riverside is actively engaged with the statewide drought and is providing timely and reliable information to inform policymakers on potential actions that may need to be taken to protect and serve the public interest.
2. **Equity** – Using water efficiently helps manage the City's water resources and helps every member of the community have equal access to the benefits of this shared and limited resource.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The efficient use of water helps keep rates down by reducing the need to develop new supplies of water or buying expensive imported water.
4. **Innovation** – Riverside is keeping abreast of all drought and regulatory updates to respond to and prepare for any potential impacts to the community. It is collaborating with regional water providers to ensure cohesive messaging that meet the needs of the region's residents.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Managing the City's water and using it efficiently ensures water supplies remain sustainable and resilient through climate change challenges.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this report. Implementation of demand reduction actions could negatively impact future revenue and their potential impacts are currently being analyzed. Conservation programs and outreach will be absorbed within approved budgets.

Prepared by: Todd M. Corbin, Utilities General Manager  
Certified as to  
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Interim Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer  
Approved by: Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager  
Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Attachment: Presentation