



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: JUNE 23, 2026
FROM: PUBLIC UTILITIES DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE 2025 WATER SHORTAGE CONTINGENCY PLAN

ISSUE:

Adoption of the 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council adopt a resolution adopting the 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan prepared by the City of Riverside’s Public Utilities Department.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

On June 8, 2026, the Board of Public Utilities with all members present, conducted a public hearing to review the 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan; Following the discussion, the Board voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution adopting the 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan prepared by the City of Riverside’s Public Utilities Department with the typographical revisions as requested by the Board.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

The City of Riverside’s Water Conservation Ordinance was first adopted by the City Council on July 26, 2011, as Chapter 14.22 of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC), in response to a statewide drought emergency issued by the Governor of California in 2009. The Ordinance was established to implement California Water Code Section 100 by prohibiting wasteful and unreasonable uses of water and promoting water conservation.

Since its adoption, the Water Conservation Ordinance has been amended periodically to reflect changes in state law and drought response practices. Most recently, the City Council adopted Ordinance 7556 on May 11, 2021, which updated the Ordinance to reference California Water Code Section 10632 shortage levels, formalize the five-stage structure, and incorporate irrigation and water-use efficiency best practices. Table 6.14.040A, of the Riverside Municipal Code, was amended by Ordinance No. 7556 to reflect updated water shortage stage definitions and conservation requirements.

Consistent with these updates, California Water Code Section 10632 requires each urban water supplier to adopt a Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) as a stand-alone document within their Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) following the 2018 legislation (AB 1668 and SB 606).

BACKGROUND:

The City's Water Conservation Ordinance (RMC Chapter 14.22) and Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) function together but serve distinct roles in the City's water shortage response framework.

The Water Conservation Ordinance establishes enforceable water use restrictions, defines the City's water shortage stages, and provides the legal authority for implementation and enforcement.

The WSCP is a state-required planning and compliance document that documents how the City would respond to water shortages and demonstrates alignment with State-mandated shortage levels.

The WSCP does not create new restrictions, modify shortage stages, or change enforcement authority. Instead, it reflects and organizes provisions already adopted through Ordinance 7556 and aligns them with the State's standardized shortage level framework required under California Water Code Section 10632. The WSCP also defines shortage response actions that can be triggered by the annual water supply and demand assessment (AWSDA). RPU annually prepares its AWSDA in compliance with the WSCP framework.

Ordinance 7556, adopted in 2021, established the City's current water shortage framework, including defined shortage stages and associated conservation measures. This WSCP update does not modify that framework.

At the December 8, 2021 Water Committee meeting, a Board Member requested the word "minimal" be removed from Section 14.22.060(B)(3) of the ordinance and the corresponding chart in the Water Shortage Contingency Plan to clarify irrigation limitations.

This requested correction is reflected in the WSCP Demand Reduction Actions Table.

Asterisks in the table denote provisions associated with a forthcoming ordinance update. These items will be considered separately and are not part of the current action.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed WSCP update is required under California Water Code Section 10632.

It includes revisions to clarify water shortage response actions, improve consistency with State requirements, and incorporate minor technical and formatting corrections.

This update does not introduce new water shortage stages, does not create new water use restrictions, and does not modify enforcement authority.

Relationship Between WSCP and Ordinance

The WSCP does not independently impose water use restrictions. All enforceable measures remain established in the City’s Water Conservation Ordinance (RMC Chapter 14.22), which provides the legal authority to implement actions if a shortage stage is declared.

If a shortage stage is declared, the City implements response actions already codified in the ordinance, which may include:

- Limits on outdoor irrigation days and times
- Prohibitions on water waste (e.g., runoff, overspray)
- Restrictions on washing hard surfaces
- Irrigation efficiency requirements

These measures correspond to the specific requirements defined for each shortage state in the Water Conservation Ordinance. The WSCP documents how these measures align with State-required shortage levels and demonstrates that the City has a predefined response framework.

Shortage Level Alignment

The WSCP aligns the City’s existing five-stage shortage framework with the State’s standardized six-level classification system, as shown below:

Riverside's Shortage Levels	Supply Condition	Supply Reduction	State's Standard Level	Shortage Level
1	Normal Water Supply	0%	1	≤10%
2	Minimum Water Shortage	<15%	2	10-20%
3	Moderate Water Shortage	15-20%		
4	Severe Water Shortage	20-50%	3	20-30%
			4	30-40%
			5	40-50%
5	Emergency Water Shortage	>50%	6	>50%

These shortage levels are not new and are already defined in the City’s Water Conservation Ordinance. The WSCP mirrors these stages and aligns them with the State’s standardized shortage level framework required by California Water Code Section 10632.

Stage Definitions Table

The table below summarizes the water shortage stages as defined in the City’s Water Conservation Ordinance and reflected in the WSCP. These stage descriptions are included for reference.

Water Shortage Contingency Plan Levels		
RPU Shortage Level	Percent Shortage Range	Water Shortage Condition
1	0%	Stage One (Normal Water Supply) applies when the City can meet all of its water demands, but declares, by resolution, that it has determined that certain conservation methods are warranted to preserve existing water supplies in the event the City will be unable to meet future water demands with its local water supplies. Any other normal water efficiency programs and water conservation regulations remain in force during Stage One.
2	<15%	Stage Two (Minimum Water Shortage) applies when the City Council declares, by resolution, a reasonable probability exists that the City will not be able to meet all of its water demands with its local water supplies, other regional or statewide conditions warrant implementation; or RPU faces an actual supply shortage of up to 15%, corresponding to CA Water Code section 10632 shortage levels 1 and 2.
3	15-20%	Stage Three (Moderate Water Shortage) applies when the City Council declares, by resolution, a reasonable probability exists that the City will not be able to meet all of its water demands with its local water supplies, other regional or statewide conditions warrant implementation; or RPU faces an actual supply shortage of 15-20%, corresponding to CA Water Code section 10632 shortage levels 2 and 3.
4	20-50%	Stage Four (Severe Water Shortage) applies when the City Council declares, by resolution, that the City's ability to meet its water demands with its local water supplies is seriously impaired; or RPU faces an actual supply shortage of 20-50%, corresponding to CA Water Code section 10632 shortage levels 3, 4, and 5.
5	>50%	Stage Five Water Shortage Emergency applies when the City Council declares, by resolution, that the City's ability to meet its water demands with its local water supplies is so seriously impaired that RPU faces an actual supply shortage of over 50%, corresponding to CA Water Code section 10632 shortage level 6.

Demand Reduction Actions

Certain items identified with asterisks in the WSCP Demand Reduction Actions Table are included for transparency and alignment with anticipated future ordinance updates. These include:

- Potential changes related to non-functional turf

- Removal of the word “minimal” related to irrigation of trees and shrubs

These items are not being adopted, are not enforceable through this action, and will be brought back separately for Board and City Council consideration through a future ordinance update. The remaining proposed changes consist of non-substantive technical and formatting corrections. These revisions do not alter the intent, application, enforcement authority, or conservation requirements of the Water Conservation Ordinance.

Adoption of the WSCP supports compliance with California Water Code Section 10632 and alignment with the City’s Urban Water Management Plan requirements.

Summary

The WSCP is a state-required planning document that establishes a framework for potential future actions. It does not implement water shortages or restrictions.

The plan is required regardless of current water supply conditions and does not change how the City currently manages water shortages.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this report.

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Attachments:

1. 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan
2. Resolution
3. Presentation