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City of Santa Paula

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July 17, 2017

Honorable Patricia M. Murphy
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

RE: Response to Ventura County Grand Jury "Final Report – Water Considerations for Cities"

Dear Judge Murphy:

On May 8, 2017, the Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) issued its report entitled "Final Report – Water Considerations for Cities" (Report). The investigative report focuses on whether Ventura County's cities have adequately considered long-term water needs. Additionally, the Grand Jury found that Santa Paula has failed to submit the required 2015 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP 2015 Update) to the State Department of Water Resources, which could result in an inability to secure State grant funding or loans.

At the conclusion of the Report, the Grand Jury directed all the cities to submit responses to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Report. The City of Santa Paula provides the following responses pursuant to Penal Code § 933.05.

FINDINGS / CONCLUSIONS

C-01: Cities' water plans are based on historic water availability patterns which may no longer be applicable. Over the last 100 years, water availability from precipitation has been trending downward and may never return to what was considered average.

City's Response to C-01: Both statewide and local precipitation is highly variable. Average precipitation at the Santa Paula-United Water Conservation District gauge for the period 1890-2014 is 17.27 inches according to the United Water Conservation

District's "Combined 2013-2014 Santa Paula Basin Annual Report." This report indicates that the long-term (124 years) average precipitation is highly variable, including periods of above normal precipitation and periods of below normal precipitation. However, the report also indicates the long-term precipitation pattern is approximately normal as determined by the cumulative annual departure from the long-term average over 124 years. At this time, the City anticipates future precipitation to continue the trends observed over the last 124 years.

C-02: Cities' plans address the minimum, state-required, three-year drought scenarios. None of the UWMPs address a long-term drought, even though the current drought has lasted over five years.

City's Response to C-02: The City's existing UWMP (dated June 2011) was adopted and submitted to the State Department of Water Resources. As discussed below, the City anticipates adoption of the UWMP 2015 Update by September 5, 2017. In the Draft UWMP 2015 Update, the City analyzed normal water-years, single dry water-years, and multiple consecutive dry water-years for the period 2020 to 2040. These analyses conclude the City's water supplies would exceed water demands through 2040. In addition, the United Water Conservation District's "Combined 2013-2014 Santa Paula Basin Annual Report" (2016) indicates that the ground water elevation index in the Santa Paula Groundwater Basin is only approximately 11 feet below average (period 1983-2014), despite receiving significantly below normal precipitation for the years 2012 to 2014. It is anticipated that the current ground water elevation data for the Santa Paula Groundwater Basin would be closer to normal as the result of winter precipitation for years 2016-2017.

C-03: Long term city plans are based on the optimistic view there will be as much water available in 2035 or 2040, as there was in 2010. Additional future water resources are not well-defined other than being described as imported water or coming from recycling and conservation efforts.

City's Response to C-03: The Santa Paula Groundwater Basin, a protected resource, is the City's sole source of potable water supply. The Santa Paula Groundwater Basin was adjudicated in 1996. According to the terms of the Judgment, the City's current allocation is 5,488 acre-feet of water per year. The City believes this allocation to be stable through 2040 and beyond.

Additionally, the City continues to support water conservation measures. The City incorporated additional water conservation measures in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order dated April 1, 2015. The City Public Works Department webpage (<http://www.ci.santa-paula.ca.us/PubWorks/WaterDiv.htm>) lists water conservation measures and a water conservation hotline number. The City has seen a 23 percent reduction in water use over the last 12 months. In addition, the City is participating in a new regional turf replacement program with the City of Ventura and Casitas Municipal Water District. The program is anticipated to begin in summer 2017. The City is also pursuing a recycled water program, which is anticipated to begin by 2020.

C-04: Current and future ratepayers will bear the burden of the cost of building water purification facilities, desalination plants, desalters, recycling plants, additional pipelines, and storage facilities needed to ensure there is an adequate water supply system in the future.

City's Response to C-04. City water rates distribute the cost of current water supplies to all customers. In order to avoid greatly impacting the water rates of customers, those seeking to develop are required to transfer water rights to the City or pay a water resource in-lieu fee for water supplies equivalent to the water demand of a proposed project pursuant to City's "Water Rights Dedication and Water Resource In-Lieu Fee" (Santa Paula Municipal Code §52.021; Resolution 7043). Section 52.021 requires urban land developers to provide sufficient water supplies for their project's water demands thereby avoiding a burden to the water supplies and customer rates. If the associated water rights are not sufficient to serve the project's anticipated water demands, or if the water rights are held by another entity which cannot or will not dedicate those rights to the City, the developer must purchase additional water rights and dedicate them to the City or pay the water resource in-lieu fee. Analyses in the Draft UWMP 2015 Update indicate that City water supplies, current and anticipated, will exceed water demands through 2040.

C-05: Since many of the cities in the County rely on MWD wholesale water, Cities should base UWMPs on the wholesalers' prediction that retail water demand will outstrip total reliable water resources by 2040.

City's Response to C-05: As noted above, the City's sole potable water supply is the Santa Paula Groundwater Basin. The City has not and does not intend to secure potable water resources from MWD.

C-06: The UWMPs use different sources for analyzing past and future populations. The inconsistency makes it difficult to compare plans, especially when cities have multiple retail water providers. Some UWMPs even use different population sources within the same report.

City's Response to C-06. The City uses data from the United States Census Bureau for historical population data in its preparation of the UWMP. For current population data, the City uses data from the State of California Department of Finance. For population projections, the City uses data from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) including SCAG's recent report, "2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy" (2016).

C-07: Cities' water plans do not appear to adequately address catastrophic failures or interruptions within the system, such as:

- infrastructure failures (dams)
- major earthquake destruction
- damage to the groundwater
 - * saltwater intrusion
 - * environmental disasters (oil or chemical spills).

City's Response to C-07. The City has prepared planning level documents that address catastrophic failures or interruptions within its water system, including but not limited to the following: Vulnerability Assessment (2002), Emergency Response Plan (2004), Water Master Plan (2005, 2012 Update), and UWMP (2011). The City's forthcoming UWMP 2015 Update will also address catastrophic failures in water supply infrastructure. City water operators also train to respond to disruptions in water supplies.

Moreover, there is redundancy in City's water supplies and water storage which would minimize disruptions in water supplies. The City extracts groundwater from up to five wells. Because the groundwater elevation ranges from 350 to 700 feet below ground surface, the City has the ability to draw water from varying sources depending on the nature of the disaster. The wells are also isolated from oil or chemical spills. The City also operates twelve reservoirs located throughout the service area, which reduce the risk in water storage from any one catastrophic event. The City does not rely on any dams for water supplies or water storage and its water supply is not threatened by saltwater intrusion.

C-08: The City of Santa Paula has been out of compliance with State law for nine months by failing to submit a 2015 UWMP, threatening access to future State funding.

City's Response to C-08. The City's existing UWMP (dated June 2011) is valid and was adopted and submitted to the State Department of Water Resources. The City has been working with the State Department of Water Resources and has continually updated it regarding the status of the UWMP 2015 Update.

Due to recent staffing and budget shortfalls in the City, preparation of the UWMP 2015 Update was delayed. The City anticipates adoption of the UWMP 2015 Update by September 5, 2017. The City does not anticipate loss of State funding for any program related to the UWMP 2015 Update.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-01: The Grand Jury recommends the 10 city councils collaborate with all the County water purveyors to develop long term plans to respond to catastrophic disruptions of water supplies.

City's Response to R-01. The City understands the concept of collaboration with other municipal agencies to develop long-term plans to respond to catastrophic disruptions in water supplies. The City's water system is located approximately five miles away from the nearest municipal drinking water system. Construction of a pipeline to connect the City to the nearest municipal water system would likely be cost prohibitive for the City. Therefore, the City must use its own resources to address catastrophic disruptions of water supplies.

The City is willing to implement this recommendation and will to engage in discussions with the other Ventura County cities to ensure an adequate supply of water resources during water supply disruptions.

R-02: The Grand Jury recommends the 10 city councils use the same data source when making population projections.

City's Response to R-02. The City will implement this recommendation. The City agrees that Ventura County cities should use the same source data when making population projections. As noted above, for population projections, the City uses data from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) including SCAG's recent report, "2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy" (2016).

R-03: The Grand Jury recommends the 10 city councils develop drought plans that extend at least 5 years.

City's Response to R-03. The City will implement this recommendation. The Water Code requires urban water agencies to include in the UWMP analyses of normal water-years, single dry water-years, and multiple consecutive dry water-years for the period 2020 to 2040. As noted above, these analyses conclude the City's water supplies would exceed water demands through 2040.

The City intends to further implement this recommendation by incorporating drought planning into the UWMP 2015 Update.

R-04: The Grand Jury recommends the 10 city councils extend drought conservation measures during non-drought years.

City's Response to R-04. The City supports implementation of this recommendation and intends to continue implementation and enforcement of water conservation measures during non-drought water years. The City Public Works Department webpage (<http://www.ci.santa-paula.ca.us/PubWorks/WaterDiv.htm>) lists water conservation measures and a water conservation hotline number.

R-05: The Grand Jury recommends the 10 city councils ensure all future water availability plans clearly identify any potential water sources that are based on unfunded or unpermitted infrastructure.

City's Response to R-05. The City does not currently have any potential water sources based on unfunded or unpermitted infrastructure. As noted above, the Santa Paula Groundwater Basin is the City's sole source of potable water supply.

R-06: The Grand Jury recommends the Santa Paula City Council direct staff to comply with State requirements for submission of the 2015 UWMP. (C-08)

City's Response to R-06. The City agrees with and will implement this recommendation. The City released the Draft UWMP 2015 Update for public review on June 30, 2017. The City anticipates that the UWMP Update 2015 will be completed and adopted by September 5, 2017.

If you have any further questions regarding this matter, please contact City Manager Michael Rock at (805) 933-4201 or mrock@spcity.org.

Very truly yours,

Jenny Crosswhite
Mayor

cc: Santa Paula City Council
Michael Rock, City Manager
John C. Cotti, City Attorney
John L. Iasin, Interim Public Works Director/City Engineer
Sam Hutton, Chief Water Operator
Caesar Hernandez, Regulatory Compliance Specialist
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