

County of San Luis Obispo Water Summit 2014

October 14, 2014



County Drought Task Force Drought Monitoring and Response

Overview

At the onset of the Governor's declaration and under the direction of the County Administrative Officer, a County Drought Task Force was formed to coordinate drought monitoring, impact assessments, responses to emergency health and safety, and public communication and outreach. The Task Force consists of representatives from County Office of Emergency Services, County Public Works Department, County General Services, County Fire, County Agricultural Commissioner, County Planning and Building, Farm Advisor, County Health Agency, County Social Services, County Counsel, and Supervisor Frank Mecham – District One.

On March 11, 2014, the Drought Task Force recommended and the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution proclaiming a local emergency due to drought conditions in San Luis Obispo County. Since the March 11 emergency proclamation, the Drought Task Force has provided monthly updates of current drought conditions and management actions to the Board. The monthly updates can be found on the Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage at www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm.

The following sections provide an overview of current countywide data collection tools, water reduction efforts at County facilities and parks, state and federal assistance programs, county emergency response planning, and public communication efforts.

Countywide Data Collection

The Drought Task Force continues to utilize a number of survey tools and data sources to coordinate drought monitoring, impact assessments, responses to emergency health and safety, and public communication and outreach.

University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Agricultural Producer Survey

Staff from the County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures and the San Luis Obispo County Office of the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) collaborated to create an agricultural producer survey to help compile information about the effects of the drought on the local agricultural industry. The monthly survey is sent to producers, local agricultural organizations and UCCE Farm Advisors representing a wide variety of crops and livestock providing a good picture of on-the-ground conditions and impacts from the drought.

Drought Business Impact survey

The San Luis Obispo County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is gathering information on local drought-related job impacts. This is part of a statewide survey by the California Labor and Workforce

Development Agency (LWDA) as part of an ongoing online survey to inform the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force of the drought's ripple effects. The WIB's Drought Business Impact survey is available at <http://sloworkforce.com/drought-survey/>. Local Workforce Investment Boards, workforce partners, and other local workforce entities are encouraged to complete the survey regularly to keep the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force up to date on the local area. The WIB is conducting outreach to chambers of commerce and other business services agencies for assistance in outreach to businesses and employers regarding the drought survey.

Domestic Water Issues-Intake Form

The number of dry groundwater wells, small streams, springs, and creeks are increasing as the drought continues. An effective response to this growing public health threat requires two key elements: (1) data collection to better understand the extent of the problem and (2) clear communication to all responding agencies and the public about available resources. As a result, the Governor's Drought Task Force created an interagency working group focused on households relying on a domestic system serving 1 to 14 homes, commonly referred to as the Less Than 15 Connections Work Group. This group created an online intake form for local, state, or tribal and federal agencies to document domestic water issues. The information is intended to inform and coordinate state response and mitigate drought impacts. Data collected is considered confidential and access is restricted. Individuals with domestic water issues are encouraged to contact County Environmental Health at (805)781-5544.

Drought Vulnerability Assessment Surveys (Water Purveyors)

County Public Health, the Public Works Department, and CAL FIRE/County Fire continue to develop plans to ensure there is adequate supply of water for firefighting and domestic water use in the event that a community does not have enough water. A request to complete a drought survey was sent to 150 small public water systems (199 service connections or fewer) regulated by the Public Health Department. To date, approximately 85 small public water systems have completed the survey. The result of each survey received has been categorized into three categories; Watch, Vulnerable, and Critical. The information has been placed into a GIS mapping layer for contingency planning. The Public Health Department is continuing to update the water purveyor GIS layer. A CAL FIRE Viewer has been created to allow the Fire Department to see updated water purveyor information immediately.

Fire Conditions

CAL FIRE/San Luis Obispo County Fire Department continues to track county fire conditions. The Live Fuel Moisture, Dead Fuel Moisture, Temperatures/Relative to Humidity, and the Energy Release Component are all indexes tracked and included in the monthly drought updates to the Board. For more information visit the Cal Fire/San Luis Obispo County Fire Department website at: <http://www.calfireslo.org/>.

Community Advisory Groups

In order to collect additional data for request additional state and federal assistance the Drought Task Force is asking each Community Advisory Groups to survey their members to ask what they are hearing from the residents in their area. The County Planning and Building Department is attempting to collect data on what councils are hearing about issues with dry wells or other drought related issues in their community and the surrounding area.

Countywide Drought Cost

County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is continuing to reach out directly to local special districts, water purveyors, and cities to gather cost information related to the drought. County OES is gathering the costs to all local public agencies throughout county in order to send the information to Cal OES. Cal OES in turn is gathering information from all counties and if a threshold is reached that may qualify for federal disaster funding a request may be made to the President to request a federal drought disaster declaration.

Water at County Facilities and Parks

The County is taking several actions to reduce water usage in County owned facilities, at County Parks, at Golf Courses, at the Airport, in new construction and lease agreements, and with fleet vehicles. Some of the current and planned reduction efforts include:

- Facility Services staff have made it a standard practice to replace older fixtures with low-flow devices. By retrofitting faucets, showerheads, and toilets with water saving devices, on-going reductions will be realized. To date, a total of 35 buildings have been retrofitted with low-flow fixtures, saving an estimated 3,000 gallons per week.
- County Parks and Golf have implemented several projects to achieve water savings in all districts: reduction of turf where practical, installation of efficient irrigation systems, use of drought tolerant and lower water demand vegetation, frequent inspection of irrigation lines and sprinkler heads for proper operation, and adding mulch to plant beds to preserve moisture.
- Current construction standards for new facilities require low-flow fixtures, incorporating drought tolerant vegetation in landscape design, water metering for individual facilities, and installation of water saving drip line irrigation systems. Future agreements for County leased spaces will implement a new standard similar to construction standards for any improvements.
- County Fleet vehicles are washed at local commercial car wash centers, which recycle water, instead of being washed at County facilities.
- A water audit was conducted in July 2014 with a focus on water efficiency opportunities for County facilities, parks, and golf. The site visit estimated a savings of 15 acre-feet by replacing fixtures and performing retrofits at County Operations Center facilities. Findings from water audit will be developed into future plans for projects.
- Proposals for Energy and Water Manager professional services contract were received, negotiations are in progress, and it is now estimated that a contract will be awarded in October.

Assistance Programs

Agricultural Assistance

The County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures and the San Luis Obispo County Office of the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) continue to track and update the public on various Agricultural Drought Assistance Programs. On April 15, 2014, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Secretary Vilsack announced that eligible farmers and ranchers can now sign up for USDA disaster assistance programs restored by passage of the 2014 federal Farm Bill. The programs are briefly summarized as follows:

- LFP – Livestock Forage Disaster Program: provides payments for grazing losses. 99% of the applications are for ranchers grazing cattle. The remaining 1 % of applicants graze sheep, goats and alpaca.
- ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: provides relief for losses due to adverse weather conditions. ECP – Emergency Conservation Program (NRCS): provides funding for rehabilitation of farmland severely damaged by natural disasters. For example repair and restoration of wells, water tanks and springs.
- EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS): provides funds for land conservation planning and implementation of conservation practices.
- NAP – Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: provides cash payments to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or planting did not occur due to natural disasters.

For information about the assistance programs, contact the USDA Farm Service Agency at (805)434-0398.

Drought Relief for Rural Residents

The Drought Task Force continues to monitor assistance programs for rural homeowners. The most recent information is posted to the county website and listed below.

USDA Rural Development Programs Offerings

Rural Development, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), delivers a number of programs to help improve the quality of life in rural communities throughout the nation. These programs may also help rural communities, businesses and individuals impacted by California's ongoing drought conditions. Opportunities include assisting rural communities, whose water supply is at risk, homeowners that need help drilling a well or connecting to a water system, food banks that anticipate increased demand and Ag producers wanting to offset Ag irrigation costs among others. For additional resources and information on applying for any of these programs please view the PDF packet www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/CA-DroughtAssistance.pdf or visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca.

Replacement Wells-Rural Community Assistance Corporation

The Rural Community Assistance Corporation (in Sacramento) recently received a grant from the USDA to administer loans for replacement wells for low to moderate income homeowners (maximum \$62,883 gross household income) in rural areas of California. Please contact Cindy Elliot at (209)576-0430 for more information and to apply.

Potable Water Delivery & Availability

The County created a list of companies/agencies that have potable water for delivery or available for pickup. The contact list can be found at the following link:

http://www.slocountywater.org/site/Water%20Resources/Water%20Forum/pdf/CONTACT%20LIST_Potable%20Water%20Availability.pdf.

Economic Loss Loans

Small, nonfarm businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations of any size affected by the drought, may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred. You can apply online for an SBA disaster assistance loan. Disaster loan information and application forms are also available from SBA's Customer Service Center by calling SBA toll-free at (800)659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov, or visiting www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance. Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call (800)877-8339.

Emergency Response Planning

County Office of Emergency Services

County OES continues to coordinate drought response with local and state agencies. County OES provides weekly reports to the State's online reporting system and through ongoing weekly conference calls, currently every other week. This reporting process is how issues throughout the county came to the attention of Cal OES and other state agencies. Cal OES has in turn coordinated with Cambria Community Services District (CSD) and various State agencies in assisting them through the permitting and related processes to move their Emergency Water Project forward.

Cambria and San Simeon Visit & Tour

As a result of County OES coordinating and reporting to Cal OES on April 18, 2014, representatives from Cal OES, County Public Health, Department of Water Resources, Coastal Commission, and county

officials visited Cambria and San Simeon to assess drought impacts in both areas. This interaction with State agencies was followed up in more recent weeks through the above noted assistance from Cal OES of coordinating with and between Cambria CSD as they pursued their Emergency Water Project.

Immediate Water Shortage Learning Event

On Thursday, July 17, 2014, local and state agencies participated in an “Immediate Water Shortage Learning Event: A Table Top Discussion Exercise”. The exercise was conducted like an emergency drill but with open discussion on the various water shortage issues and potential response plans. Participating agencies included the California Department of Water Resources, State Water Quality Control Board, California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network, Cal OES, Cal Fire, the Public Works Department, County Public Health, County Agriculture, Oceano CSD, Cambria CSD, Templeton CSD, Atascadero City, Atascadero Mutual Water District, City of Paso Robles, Fire Cities Fire Authority, Camp Roberts, PG&E Diablo Canyon, American Red Cross, and County OES. The event simulated a number of scenarios such as a local community running out of water with the purpose to help those within the San Luis Obispo County Operational Area in understanding local and state resources and authorities and how to make emergency requests should sudden events occur related to the loss of water. The exercise was very beneficial and the concept for this type of discussion exercise was shared by Cal OES to other counties throughout the state.

CAL FIRE/County Fire Department

If a community runs out of all water, not only is there an immediate need to provide the community with drinking water to maintain public health but there is also a need to ensure that in the event of a fire there is adequate hydrant water to prevent the spread of a fire from becoming a conflagration. CAL FIRE/County Fire Department continues to plan for a variety of future scenarios. Some of the response and planning efforts are described below.

Contingency Planning

In order to identify community water systems that could be threatened by the extensive use of water during a major fire or by a major water line failure, an inventory of all the water purveyors in the County was conducted by County Public Health and County Fire and then mapped using GIS. These maps are available on all the County Fire Departments mobile data computers. During a fire the fire commanders can use these maps to identify which water sources are reliable so not to draw down systems that are vulnerable. Further, if a water system fails and notification of the correct water purveyor contact is needed, this data is now available. Unfortunately not all of the water purveyors participated in the survey.

If a fire is burning for an extended period of time and it is anticipated that large quantities of water will be used, the fire commanders have been instructed to establish a water liaison officer who will be tasked with focusing on working with the water purveyor and other agencies to protect a community’s water system. Alternative water systems could be brought into the communities to provide emergency water supplies. These options include, water trucks, portable water tanks and the recently acquired water bladders. The fire department now has six 20,000 gallon federal excess portable bladders that it can quickly deploy and fill with water. Sources such as treated water from sewage treatment facilities, natural water sources such as streams and lakes or excess desalination water from PG&E Diablo Canyon Power Plant may need to be used.

County-Wide Burn Ban

California’s increased fire activity, coupled with record-setting drought conditions required the CAL FIRE/San Luis Obispo County Fire Department to take every step possible to prevent new wildfires from starting. In order to reduce potential ignitions CAL FIRE/San Luis Obispo suspended all burning permits and open fires within the State Responsibility Area and within the Local Responsibility Area under contract with CAL FIRE on July 1, 2014. This burn suspension will remain in effect until there is enough precipitation to reduce the fire threat.

Public Communication

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues and communicate the call for a 20% voluntary reduction in water usage, the County continues to examine multiple channels of communication for water conservation outreach efforts. The task force is currently utilizing multiple tools to communicate the importance of water conservation. Some of the tools include:

- Local Collaboration: The County continues to work collaboratively with a network of water purveyors and cities for broad public outreach.
- Website Marketing & Social Media: The County Administrative Office created a webpage that contains drought information, latest news and updates, water conservation tips, and links to other drought related websites. www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm. In addition, the following websites are currently in use by the County:
 - Save our Water (www.saveourwater.org)
 - SLO Water Wise Landscaping website (www.slowaterwiselandscaping.com)
 - San Luis Obispo County Water Resources website (www.slocountywater.org)
 - University of California Cooperative Extension (http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/)
- Water Purveyor Outreach (use water bill as the first-line educational tool): The Public Works Department continues to develop and distribute water conservation information to water customers.
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs): Staff continues to remain in contact with multiple media sources to request the airing of PSAs prepared by the State.
- News Media: Staff continues to examine all media outlets. Staff submitted drought awareness and water conservation slides to AGP Video. The slides are currently part of the Channel 21 and Channel 20 slideshows (SLO-SPAN network) and televised as part of local government meetings. The slides have been incorporated into the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' slideshows that play during break periods.
- Other Marketing Tools: The County continues to examine other marketing tools for water conservation outreach.

Drought Related Websites for More Information

County of San Luis Obispo Drought Conditions and Water Conservation,
(http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm)
State's Water Conservation Campaign; Save our Water (www.saveourh2o.org)
California's Drought Information Clearinghouse; Drought.CA.Gov (ca.gov/drought/)
California Department of Food and Agriculture; Drought information (www.cdffa.ca.gov/drought/)
California Department of Water Resources; Current Water Conditions (www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/)
California State Water Resources Control Board; Water Rights, Drought Info and Actions
(www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml)
California Department of Public Health; Drinking Water CDPH Drinking Water Program
(www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx)
USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information; USDA Programs
(usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE)
UC Cooperative Extension Drought Information Resources; Drought Information Resources;
cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/