



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Board of Directors
Title: Water Efficiency Master Plan Workshop
From: Paul Sellier, Director of Water Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: May 1, 2024

AS *B*

TYPE OF ACTION: Action X Information Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Receive an update on the Water Efficiency Maser Plan

SUMMARY: The 2024 Water Efficiency Master Plan (WEMP) outlines a strategic roadmap for enhancing water conservation efforts and promoting sustainable practices. Through rigorous evaluation and community engagement, the plan sets clear goals and identifies targeted activities to achieve optimal water savings. By leveraging policy, education, incentives, innovation and collaboration the WEMP aims to reduce potable water use and help to ensure a resilient and sustainable water future for District customers. During the meeting, staff will review the WEMP to obtain Board input on the Draft Plan. Following the Workshop staff will incorporate any edits and bring the item for further review to a future the Communications and Water Efficiency Committee Meeting.

DISCUSSION: The District boasts a well-established and award winning Water Efficiency Program. The 2024 Water Efficiency Master Plan outlines a comprehensive five-year strategy aimed at achieving community supported water savings. At the Water Efficiency Master Plan Board Workshop, staff will discuss water use, explain how demand reduction objectives were established, and describe activities and initiatives tailored to achieve these objectives.

Development of Reduction Goals

The demand reduction goals establish targets for water savings in the years ahead. Each measure, for which quantifiable water savings could be estimated, underwent an evaluation that included projected per unit water savings, forecasted customer participation, and identified incentive levels to encourage participation. The cost of each measure, including necessary staff time, incentives and marketing materials, were compared to the current (2023) cost to the District of purchasing water from the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA). Measures with costs equal to or less than the cost of water from SCWA were taken as cost effective. Cost effectiveness is important, but recognizing that certain measures, such as the Customer Assistance Program or Rain Barrels for example, may not be cost

effective are nonetheless important outreach tools that help to drive participation in other cost-effective programs. Overall, the measures and incentives described in the WEMP are considered as a whole. Staff anticipate that the WEMP will adapt over time, building on successful measures and finding new innovative ways connect with our customers.

The WEMP projects 1,070 acre feet (acft) demand reduction in 2025, 3,350acft in 2035 and 4,160acft in 2045 resulting in per capita water use of 106 gallons/connection/day (GPCD) in 2045. To achieve these goals, water use would need to remain well below the pre-water shortage emergency level seen in 2020; this essentially makes drought response water use the new norm for the community over the next few decades.

Activities and Initiatives

The District currently offers an extensive range of incentives and educational programs to support our customers in understanding their water use and provides resources for becoming more efficient and seeks to reduce the out of pocket costs to achieve greater efficiency. Additionally, both District and statewide policies play a pivotal role in shaping water use patterns. Anticipated advancements in technology and changes in customer accessibility to their water usage data are expected to influence future initiatives. This includes technology that is currently widespread across the water industry such as AMI and user portals to access water use data. In addition, the District will remain open to leverage new technology, which may provide additional water savings.

The WEMP does not propose new, significant changes to the current activities and initiatives. Instead, it proposes refinements through data collection to verify assumed water savings, new engagement strategies to increase local partnerships, which help carry the message and promote our program offerings, and pilot projects to vet new ideas that may be deemed effective to accelerate implementation of District water saving goals.

Community Engagement

As part of the Water Efficiency Master Plan development process, a community workshop was held on August 29, 2023, inviting District customers to share insights and provide feedback on current programs. Input from this event has been incorporated into the WEMP. Since the community workshop it has become clear that many customers within the service area may not have a clear understanding of what level of water use could be deemed 'efficient.' Staff has taken steps to promote an efficient homes water use with the goal of increasing interest in our program measures.

Simultaneously, the Plan outlines steps to target outreach campaigns to increase participation in markets with historically low participation levels, such as renters, high water users, and low-income customers. Staff will provide details on the workplan that will be utilized to increase awareness of the program offerings and outreach to promote participation. Moving forward, the Plan will be subject to adaptive management principles, ensuring periodic updates to reflect evolving needs and priorities.

Board Considerations for Near Term Implementation

The High-Efficiency Toilet Rebate program, which was reinstated during the water shortage emergency, and the longstanding High-Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebate are a largely ineffective use of District resources because high flow toilets and washing machines are no longer available for purchase. The funds allocated to these programs would be redirected to support a new Custom Rebate program

tailored for Commercial, Institutional, Irrigation, and Multi-Family Customers. These proposed incentive changes will be discussed for Board input.

There are also near-term policy considerations that have been developed for the Boards input. These include the previously discussed Graywater Ordinance repeal and replacement with a new standard to allow customers who are making significant changes to their property and/or new connections to choose the landscape option that best suits them while aligning with the District goal of water use efficiency.

The other near term proposed policy change would address the District's current fixture standards. The District requires that all interior plumbing installed, replaced, or moved in any new or existing service be high-efficiency fixtures. Previously, the District code for interior plumbing fixtures stood as one of the most forward-thinking in the State. However, with the advancement the State's CALGreen Building standards, the District's regulations have become outdated. As all the local jurisdictions are required to enforce CALGreen standards, there exists a need to update the District code to align with the State regulations, ensuring that the updated standards continue driving efficiency in the region. Staff is proposing the current outdated code be replaced with the State's CalGreen Fixture Standards which are updated every three years to align with the latest technology.

The 2024 Water Efficiency Master Plan represents a strategic blueprint for advancing the District's commitment to water conservation and efficiency. With a well-defined framework in place, supported by community engagement and expert input, the District will be poised to achieve significant strides in reducing water demand and promoting sustainable practices. By setting clear reduction goals, identifying targeted activities and initiatives, and adapting to emerging technologies and customer needs, staff is confident in the District's ability to navigate the evolving landscape of water management effectively. Through collaboration with stakeholders, including the Board, staff, customers, and the wider community, the District will continue to drive innovation and progress, ensuring a resilient and sustainable water future for all.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. DRAFT Water Efficiency Master Plan