



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 6492
June 4, 2024
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6492: Water Shortage Consumption Reduction Actions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive report on recommended water shortage response actions.	

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
STAFF:	Jason Kintner, Public Works Chief of Operations Alanna DeRogatis, Sustainability Program Analyst
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Customer Consumption Reduction Actions
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to present recommended actions in response to the water supply emergency.

- On May 1, 2024, the City Manager issued [Proclamation No. 329](#) Declaring a Local Emergency due to the reduction in the supply of incoming potable water to Mercer Island caused by a leak in the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) primary water supply pipeline to Mercer Island.
- Mercer Island City Code Chapter 15.18 Water Use Restrictions authorizes the City to impose water restrictions in the event of a declared water supply emergency.
- The Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) provides guidelines to manage the water supply and consumption in the event of a water shortage.
- The City anticipates entering the Voluntary Stage of the WSCP this month. The City will request that the community implement the Voluntary Actions outlined in Exhibit 1 utilizing several communication strategies to inform residents and businesses.

BACKGROUND

SPU is the sole provider of potable water to Mercer Island. On April 3, 2024, the City of Mercer Island (City) learned that the SPU primary water supply pipeline to Mercer Island was leaking. Consequently, SPU crews significantly reduced water flow in the pipeline, eliminating its use as the primary supply line. Mercer Island

has been receiving water through a smaller backup water line since April 4. SPU and City staff have been working to repair the primary water supply line, however given the highly technical nature of the repairs, work is not expected to be complete until mid to late summer. The backup line will not supply enough water to keep up with the higher water demand typical during the summer months, and curtailment efforts will need to be enacted for the City to continue meeting its customers' daily water demands.

On May 1, the City Manager declared a local emergency with [Proclamation No. 329](#) due to the reduction in the potable water supply to Mercer Island caused by the aforementioned leak in the primary water supply pipeline from SPU. The City Council ratified this Proclamation on May 21 ([AB 6471](#)).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Mercer Island City Code [Chapter 15.18 – Water Use Restrictions](#) authorizes the City to impose water use restrictions in the event of a declared water supply emergency. The City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) provides guidelines to manage the water supply and consumption in the event of a water shortage. The plan enables the City to maintain essential public health and safety and minimize adverse impacts on economic activity, environmental resources, and the City operations. The WSCP has four water shortage response stages:

- **Advisory Stage:** Recognition of serious potential for a water shortage and implementation of supply management actions.
- **Voluntary Stage:** Customers are asked to participate in voluntary actions to reduce water use.
- **Mandatory Stage:** Prohibits or limits certain customer actions and may be accompanied by an enforcement plan to achieve water reduction goals.
- **Emergency Stage:** Addresses the most severe need for consumption reduction and mandates curtailment actions, with an enforcement program.

The City anticipates activating the Voluntary Stage of the plan in mid-June (see Exhibit 1). Data from recent years indicates that July is typically the highest water consumption month and is expected to be the most crucial period for reducing water demand. The WSCP identifies 28 actions that water customers can implement during the Voluntary Stage to significantly reduce water use – a combination of both behavior and hardware changes. The most restrictive Voluntary Actions include irrigating only three times per week and recommending reducing shower times by two minutes.

The City hopes that by implementing these actions, entering the Mandatory Stage can be avoided. Restrictions in the Mandatory Stage will likely include strict limits on irrigation, and other high water use activities such as pressure washing and filling pools. During the Mandatory Stage enforcement provisions will also be implemented, subject to review and approval by the City Council.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to work with SPU on the repair solution for the primary water supply pipeline and restoring the normal supply of potable water to Mercer Island. In the meantime, City staff will deploy robust communication on the water conservation measures utilizing the City's social media channels (NextDoor, Facebook, X, Instagram) and the MI Weekly email newsletter to inform the community about this plan. Targeted outreach will be made to businesses, churches, schools, and clubs. A direct mailer is also under consideration and may be deployed as we get closer to July and what is typically the highest water use month of the year. The communications team is also working on a short video message to provide an overview of the

water supply issue. The communication strategy includes regular updates to the community on the effect of the water conservation measures.

All of these communications will direct viewers back to a centralized [Let's Talk page](#) with information about water conservation, definitions and explanations for each stage, and an overview of why the City is asking residents and businesses to take these actions. Additional community engagement will be undertaken through the summer, including connecting with the community at various special events. Communications and engagement efforts will be updated and modified as water conservation needs change.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report and provide comment on recommended actions.