

July 22, 2010

Mr. Grant Davis, General Manager
Sonoma County Water SCWA
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95406

Subject: Comments to the May 2010 Water Supply Strategies Action Plan

Dear Mr. Davis:

At the meeting of July 21, 2010, Council authorized me, as the WAC representative, to submit these comments to the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) on behalf of the City of Sonoma. We thank your staff for presenting the action plan to the City at our July 7, 2010 meeting and appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

The City had previously submitted comments to the SCWA's Water Supply Strategies in a letter dated September 17, 2009 to the previous General Manager, Mr. Randy Poole. Our letter focused on two over-arching priorities of specific interest to the City: SCWA's delivery of a safe, reliable and consistent supply at a fair and reasonable price; and the practice of transparency and collaboration in water supply decisions made by the SCWA that affect the City. We appreciate that the SCWA goals shown on page 2 of the action plan generally address the City's priorities. However, we believe the over-arching priorities on page 2 should include the priorities established by the Water Advisory Committee (WAC), and not the initial priorities set by the TAC.

Given the WAC's over-arching priorities, the City submits the following comments to the Water Supply Strategies Action Plan as provided by Council along with supplemental comments provided by staff:

1. Fulfill Contractual Obligations to the Water Contractors. The SCWA's ability to fulfill contractual obligations to the water contractors is the single-most important water supply priority facing the City of Sonoma. The way the strategies are written, it is not apparent that this is a priority item that must be addressed. The City relies on water purchased from the SCWA for 95 percent of its demands. While the City does have local groundwater supply to supplement its water demand, the City's practice, for the protection and health of the groundwater basin, is to use those wells during periods of drought. Under normal and wet-year hydrologic conditions, the City uses SCWA water. However, because of

recent water shortage conditions, not necessarily due to drought conditions, it appears that the SCWA will continue to focus on calls for mandatory water conservation and rationing instead of focusing on water supply projects that will alleviate the constant calls for such draconian measures. The City of Sonoma's water conservation program is very active and the City is committed to spending the time and resources necessary to continually reduce per capita water demands. However, water conservation takes time and is a long-term solution to permanently reducing water demand.

2. Strategy 9 – Implement Integrated Water Management. Based on response from SCWA staff at the July 7th meeting, it is our understanding that the City's priority for the SCWA to fulfill contractual water supply obligations to the water contractors is addressed in Strategy 9. On page 20 of the action plan, we believe that groundwater banking should be identified and included as a priority program in the "Immediate Action One" for Strategy 9. This is more crucial to our City than a recycled water program. In addition, there should be provision within this strategy for allowing temporary "side" agreements between water contractors for the transfer or "wheeling" of contracted water supply during periods of drought and other water shortage conditions to alleviate the severity of mandatory rationing that may affect the various water contractors differently.
3. Strategy 4 – Identify Projects within Agency Flood Control Zones that Reduce Flooding and Increase Groundwater Recharge. The City strongly supports this strategy and believes this to be an important strategy in the Sonoma Valley basin. We have the governance and inter-agency structures in place to effectively implement this strategy. It is our request that the City continue to be included in the SCWA's identification and prioritization of these "conjunctive use" projects that combine these two important activities. It is suggested that the SCWA pursue continued Zone 3A funding through the countywide benefit assessments tax as this is a valuable source of flood control project funding to both the City and the SCWA.
4. Practice transparency and collaboration in water supply planning decision-making. Because of the contractual relationship between the City and SCWA, it is critical that the SCWA continues to practice transparency and collaboration with its water contractors when making decisions on water supply matters that affect us. We appreciate the efforts the SCWA has made during the development of the Water Supply Strategies. This transparency and collaboration will be most important during the implementation of the action plan as that will affect the amount of water supply will be provided to the City as well as the cost of that supply. We request that a "look ahead" milestone schedule for water supply decisions be provided to the City, in writing, so that we are aware of future actions and meetings that may affect us. We appreciate that SCWA staff has made itself available and always willing to make presentations to our Council whenever requested.

5. Local Supply Projects. The City has three proposed municipal wells included in its 10-year Capital Improvement Plan. During this fiscal year, the proposed Well No. 8 is in the siting and feasibility study phase. The City is reviewing other local supply projects and the list of proposed projects will be presented to Council and the public at an upcoming water workshop, currently anticipated to occur in late August or early September 2010.

Again, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide these comments. For any questions regarding this letter, please contact our Public Works Director, Milenka Bates. Ms. Bates can be reached at 933-2230.

Sincerely,

Laurie Gallian, Councilmember
WAC Representative

cc: Steve Barbose, Mayor
August Sebastiani, Mayor Pro Tem
Ken Brown, Councilmember
Joanne Sanders, Councilmember
Linda Kelly, City Manager
Milenka Bates, Public Works Director
Toni Bertolero, City Engineer
Jake Mackenzie, WAC Chair
Chris DeGabriele, Water TAC Chair