

**WATER RESOURCES & CONSERVATION
COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES**

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

4:15 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Directors: Paul Sethy (Chair), Aziz Akbari



Staff: Robert Shaver, Laura Hidas, Ed Stevenson, Thomas Niesar, Stephanie Nevins,
Megan Maurino

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Conservation Programs Update: Megan Maurino, Water Conservation Specialist, provided an update on the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) programs the District takes part in and the Water Efficient Landscape (WEL) rebate program. There are several programs that conservation staff administers, but there are three programs the District participates in through the BAWSCA: rain barrel rebates, High Efficiency Toilet (HET) rebates for residential customers, and large landscape audits. Participation in these programs started several years ago and the District will continue to participate in these same programs next fiscal year (FY2019/20). BAWSCA plans to discontinue the HET rebate program after December 31, 2019, due to lack of interest by other agencies, which will require staff to reassess offering this program. There is funding in the FY2019/20 budget for these programs. By participating in these programs through BAWSCA instead of running the programs in-house, the District is able to minimize the staff resources needed to run programs like these because BAWSCA performs many of the administrative tasks. The District does, however, process the rebate checks in-house for the HET program and the rain barrel rebate program.

Program Descriptions:

- Rain Barrel Rebates – The District offers a \$50 per rain barrel rebate (up to 2 rebates per household) for rain barrels that are 50 gallons or more.
- HET Rebates – The District offers a \$100 per toilet rebate (up to 3 toilets per household) for inefficient toilets that are replaced with qualifying EPA WaterSense certified Premium high-efficiency toilets (HETs) that use 1.06 gallons per flush or less.
- Large Landscape Audits – Through this program the District provides comprehensive landscape audits to large landscape sites in the service area that are consistently over their water budget. BAWSCA-contracted landscape auditors fully evaluate irrigation systems to find deficiencies and make recommendations for improvements at these sites.

The District's Water-Efficient Landscape (WEL) rebate program currently offers \$0.50/square foot (sq. ft.) to Commercial, Industrial and Institutional (CII), Homeowners Associations (HOA), and Multifamily Residential (MFR) customers who replace their lawn with water-efficient plants. The District previously offered the WEL rebate to Single Family Residential (SFR) customers at \$1/sq. ft. but the rebate was put on hold in late 2015 when the

Department of Water Resources (DWR) started a statewide turf removal rebate program. The DWR program began offering the District's SFR customers up to \$2/sq. ft. during the drought but that program recently ended.

Staff intends to reoffer the WEL rebate to SFR customers at the original rebate amount, \$1/sq. ft., and raise the rebate amount rate for CII/HOA/MFR from \$0.50/sq. ft. to \$1/sq. ft. for uniformity for all customers and consistency within the region. We are evaluating ways to streamline the WEL rebate process to limit the number of staff hours devoted to the program. There will be a maximum of \$1,500 per SFR customer and \$20,000 for CII/HOA/MFR customers. The rebate amount is intended to further incentivize customers to take advantage of this program.

\$1/sq. ft. is a cost-effective rebate amount for the District. Depending on the life of the landscape, the avoided cost for this program ranges from \$626-695/acre-foot, including staff time to administer the program. This rebate amount is comparable to what other water agencies currently offer. There is funding in the FY2019/20 budget to support a \$1/sq. ft. rebate amount for the WEL program. A Proposition 1 grant project proposal, which includes funding for WEL rebates, has been submitted through a regional conservation group.

On April 24, 2019, the Committee was presented information regarding the Low Income Water Savings Partnership Program. As part of the District-offered services, customers will be presented a packet of materials and spend 10 minutes with a contractor discussing water conservation and District-related information such as water quality, the Help on Tap program, and emergency preparedness. Staff has created an eco-friendly packet of materials in efforts to make the District more "green." Ms. Maurino shared an example of the packet and its contents.

Staff responded to question from the Directors regarding other potential BAWSCA programs and different funding opportunities for rebates. Director Akbari asked about what benefit participating in a BAWSCA-run program has versus one run by staff. Ms. Maurino stated that there is great benefit during program initiation but that on-going the administration of the program only constitutes a 10%-20% time savings for staff. The Directors expressed their support for the conservation programs discussed.

2. USGS Stream Gaging Five Year Agreement Renewal: Thomas Niesar, Water Supply and Planning Manager, informed the committee that ACWD's five-year funding agreement with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) is ready for renewal. This agreement funds five stream gaging stations in the Alameda Creek watershed that ACWD relies on for compliance with State Water Resources Control Board water rights requirements, managing our daily recharge operations, and for compliance with our Biological Opinion with National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS). The estimated maximum cost to operate and maintain the five gages over the next five years is \$497,425. Staff will bring this item to the July Board Meeting for approval.
3. ACWD Water Reuse Planning Update: Thomas Niesar, Water Supply and Planning Manager, provided an overview of the history of recycled water planning at ACWD since

1993 and continuing through the current investigation into indirect potable reuse (IPR) of wastewater. Mr. Niesar explained that a non-potable supply has become increasingly infeasible due to a decline in potential demand for a non-potable supply, with a corollary increase in unit cost (dollars per Acre-Foot of water, or \$/AF). He noted that the decline in demand stems from a reduction in water-intensive manufacturing, curtailed plans to build two golf-courses, public acceptance of turf-replacement with drought-tolerant landscaping, and new state regulations which limit high water-use landscaping with new development. As a result, the potential yield of a non-potable supply has reduced from over 4,000 AF/yr. to just 1,300 AF/yr., with the capitalized unit cost of water rising from \$3,230/AF to \$9,190/AF. By contrast, the 2016 IPR study found that 4,174 AF/yr. of water for groundwater recharge could be produced at a capitalized cost of \$2,430/ AF. He concluded that, without a non-potable supply in the future, the exorbitant expense of building a non-potable system does not make financial sense.

Mr. Niesar informed the committee that it is staff's intention to focus future recycled water planning efforts toward potable reuse options. Discussion ensued and staff responded to questions from the Directors. Both Directors Sethy and Akbari expressed interest ensuring reuse options considered by the District continue to be environmentally responsible. Staff noted that this topic can be addressed in future updates and policy discussions.

4. Public Comments: There were no comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Topics discussed by the Committee were informational only, and no recommendations are being made.