

# SOLANO COUNTY WATER AGENCY



May 18, 2009

TO: State Water Resources Control Board

RE: Comments on Draft 20X2020 Water Conservation Plan

The Solano County Water Agency (SCWA) provides wholesale water supply to cities, institutions and agricultural districts in Solano County. We have a very active urban and agricultural conservation programs that enhances and supports conservation activities of our retail water suppliers. SCWA is a member of the California Urban Water Conservation Council and the Agricultural Water Management Council, as are many of our member agencies. We won't take the time to outline all our water conservation activities, but they are extensive. We have a long record of strong support for water conservation, but we have major concerns with the approach in the draft report that seeks to increase conservation levels with little regard to local cost effectiveness of measures.

Our comments are grouped by the major Section of the report.

## **Introduction**

The draft report does a good job summarizing the existing data on water conservation and correctly notes that accuracy and consistency of conservation and water use reporting is lacking. Using the available data and some broad assumptions the report tries to quantify existing urban water use and the conservation measures needed to reduce per capita water use by 20% by 2020. While this type of analysis is helpful for statewide planning and possibly regional planning, the data is not accurate enough to justify a regulatory program mandating new water conservation efforts nor is the data accurate enough to set parameters or targets for water conservation at the regional or local level. In short, it is not a workable plan.

It is unclear what the Governor mean in his letter to the Legislature. By using the word "per capita", the report assumes that the Governor's intent was only urban use, leaving out agricultural water use, which is far greater use compared to urban use in California. Also his intentions regarding CII use are unclear. CII water use will vary tremendously depending on the type and amount of CII connections a water supplier has. Before we embark on a major new program, perhaps the Governor should be asked to clarify his intent. We believe programs for residential, CII, and agriculture need to be included, but as separate approaches.

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Further, it is unclear what the Governor meant when he qualified the plan as to be implemented “to the extent of permitted by current state law.” Current state law does not mandate any level of conservation or submittal of a conservation plan, except for what is required in Urban Water Management Plans. Existing statutes require, in Urban Water Management Plans, that a water supplier analyze each BMP for implementation, but expressly includes a cost benefit analysis to help the water supplier determine if the BMP should be implemented. Existing law does not require implementation of BMPs that are not locally cost effective.

The Governor goes on to state that he would “welcome legislation to incorporate this goal into statute.” Note that the word “goal” is used. Webster’s defines the word “goal” as “an end toward which an effort is directed.” Thus a goal is not required to be met, but an effort is to be made to get to that end. Thus the intent of the Governor was to develop a plan and/or legislation to put forth an effort to try to get to a 20% per capita reduction.

It is inappropriate to reference AB 2175 (of the 2007-2008 legislative session) in the context of an example of a good agricultural water conservation program using terms “vitaly important institutional improvement” and “balanced and comprehensive approach” and “sound water management strategy” without conducting an analysis. AB 2175 failed in the legislature because there were flaws in its approach to increased conservation.

We note that the report does not include recycled wastewater or desalination as conserved. Instead these amounts are subtracted from baseline amounts. Thus they do not count toward the goal directly, but by reducing the baseline, it takes less conserved water to meet the goal.

### **Establishing a Baseline and Targets**

2005 is selected as a baseline year after examining years 1995 through 2005. The report states that “no discernable trend” of statewide or regional use was found over this time period. However when analyzed at a water supplier level, any given year could have major water use changes due to a number of factors and any goal should be based on a number of years of water use averaged. This further illustrates the problem of translating a statewide goal into regional or local action by the methods proposed.

The report clearly notes that the submittal of water use information is not standardized and there are weaknesses in the use of this data for the purposes of determining baselines and achievement of per capita reduction. A first step should be to develop a standardized water use reporting system before additional conservation measures are proposed. This section also points out the need for a strengthened cost effectiveness analysis standardized process.

The report appropriately goes into great detail about the data and estimates used to analyze how much per capita water use is reduced by various conservation measures and points out limitations.

The use of CALFED water conservation estimates of 2006 should be qualified. That report was used for statewide planning efforts. As such, the data and assumptions used were scrutinized by stakeholders in that context. If that report is now going to be used for regulatory purposes to implement a statewide water conservation program that dictates conservation on a water supplier basis, that report needs further review in a public forum.

The report breaks down the state into ten hydrologic regions for quantifying water use and conservation potential. Again, for a statewide planning report this may be a necessary simplification. However if the report is used to establish regional targets that translate to local targets, such an oversimplification is not appropriate. For example, in Solano County Fairfield and Vacaville are adjacent cities, but happen to be in different hydrologic regions, regions 2 and 5 respectively. In Table 3 there is almost a 100 GPCP difference in estimated current water use between the two regions. Further tables showing increased conservation scenarios for each region use this approach that results in very different goals between adjacent regions. Note that within regions there are very different hydrologic and meteorological conditions that warrant consideration in any regulatory program.

The use of regionally cost effective, as opposed to locally (water supplier) cost effectiveness, assume regional cooperation that may not always be possible.

The report calls for accelerated coverage goals for some BMP's by removing locally cost effective exemptions. We oppose any variance to the test of local cost effectiveness.

The report suggests a once or twice weekly lawn irrigation requirement. This must be a local decision.

## **Recommendations**

Putting the 20% goal in statute is acceptable, if it is put into statute as a goal and not a required target. The local cost effectiveness exemption must be maintained. We agree with all but last bullet (targets and deadlines) of recommendations for legislation (pg 30)

Agree with lead agency duties (pg 31)

Agree with need for statewide database (pg 32-33)

Agree outdoor landscape should be a high priority for conservation efforts, but do not specify watering frequency – that needs to be a locally determined program as there are so many variables that prohibit a statewide standard. Maintain locally cost effective standard.

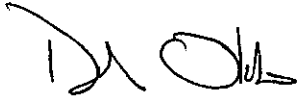
Water conservation pricing and rate structures need to be left to local control.

Agree that state funding for water conservation to make non cost effective programs cost effective are a method to increase conservation levels.

Public goods charge should be discussed as part of an overall Delta package and not be advocated as part of only the water conservation effort.

We hope that these comments are helpful in modifying the draft report. If you have any questions please contact me at 707 455-1103 or at [dokita@scwa2.com](mailto:dokita@scwa2.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Okita', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Okita  
General Manager

CC: Patrick Leathers, The Gualco Group

File: W-1 20X2020 comments