



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0202, **Version:** 1

Environmental Management Department recommending the Board designate the El Dorado Water Agency (EDWA) Water Resources Development and Management Plan's Plenary/Advisory Group to serve as the Alternative Process to formulating a Drought Task Force as required by Senate Bill 552.

FUNDING: EDWA.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 552, Drought planning: small water suppliers: nontransient noncommunity water systems, which was signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom on September 23, 2021, has new drought planning requirements affecting the approximately 130 small water suppliers throughout El Dorado County (County). SB 552 is the result of implementing SB 606 and Assembly Bill 1668, Water Management Planning, of 2018, which are jointly designed to overhaul California's approach to conserving water by improving statewide water conservation and drought planning. Together, these bills require the State Water Resources Control Board, in coordination with the Department of Water Resources, to establish long-term urban water use efficiency standards by June 30, 2022. Those standards will include components for indoor residential use, outdoor residential use, water losses and other uses. Additionally, the bills require local water suppliers to calculate water use objectives and report actual water uses.

SB 552 recognizes that small water suppliers are currently not covered by established water shortage requirements.

SB 552, which added a new Section 10609.70 to the Water Code, requires the County to establish a standing drought and water shortage task force (Task Force) to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. In lieu of the Task Force, SB552 allows the County to establish an Alternative Process to the Task Force. The alternative process is required to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness, and provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers and residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

Rather than form a new task force or process, EDWA has an established plenary and advisory group to serve as the task force and provide the process that satisfies the State requirement.

Program Background

While improving drought resiliency is imperative, small water suppliers will need assistance to meet these new requirements. The County Environmental Management Department (EMD), working with the EDWA, seeks to support implementation of SB 552, consistent with the roles and responsibilities outlined in the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EDWA and the County of El Dorado to manage water resources, approved by the Board on November 20, 2018 (Legistar ID 18-1580).

The MOU between EDWA and the County designates the EDWA to prepare the Countywide Water Management Plan, which serves as a planning and decision-making tool to determine projected water supply and demand needs through buildout of the County's General Plan. The development of a Countywide Water Management Plan is intended to facilitate coordination amongst the County, EDWA and the various County water purveyors to ensure alignment between the various entities' planning products. The MOU also includes provisions for EDWA to prepare water availability assessments for the County in the existing service area boundaries of the water purveyors and in the unrepresented areas of the County, and to coordinate, as needed, with the water purveyors within the County to ensure that baseline facts and assumptions for water planning are consistent.

EDWA's 2019 Water Resources Development and Management Plan (Plan) is the current version of the Countywide Water Management Plan. The Plan was developed through collaboration with the County, City of Placerville, water purveyors, business interests, agricultural interests and other interested parties - they identified the need for more robust drought preparedness and response actions. The various parties formed the Advisory Group and, under a subsequent action for the adoption of the Plan, a Plenary Committee consisting of the Advisory Group was designated to meet bi-annually, or as needed, to keep the Plan updated and to address new water resources issues within the county. The Advisory Group under the Plan's Plenary Committee is currently structured and would continue to be facilitated by EDWA to meet the requirements of Section 10609.70 to the Water Code regarding drought and water shortage preparedness for the small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. This alternative process would continue to provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

One important action from the Plan is for EDWA to lead the collaboration with US Bureau of Reclamation to develop the Upper American River Basin Regional Drought Contingency Plan with local partners including the County. The regional drought plan outlines various mitigation actions to address drought vulnerabilities, including those for small water suppliers with considerations of potential requirements set forth in SB 552. Improving water resilience for small water systems are also included in the Strategic Plan for EDWA that was updated in 2020.

The County and EDWA have long recognized that small water suppliers in El Dorado County are vulnerable to droughts. Currently, the major water purveyors in El Dorado County have either a drought plan or drought ordinance to manage water supply shortages during droughts. However, the small water suppliers are not actively managed by an agency. Additionally, small water suppliers often rely on surface water from local minor streams, or from the vulnerable and generally low-yield fractured rock groundwater aquifers. In recognition of this vulnerability, various planning activities are already underway by the County and EDWA in anticipation of the enactment of SB 552.

Additionally, EDWA participated in the Department of Water Resources (DWR) stakeholder advisory group, known as the County Drought Advisory Group (CDAG), to inform the development of recommendations for the State Legislature last year. EDWA specifically provided comments on the unique difficulties that rural foothill communities experience in improving drought resiliency.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board could choose to establish a separate standing county drought and water shortage task force.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

See discussion above

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

County of El Dorado Environmental Management Department
El Dorado Water Agency

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

Approve as recommended.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The costs for the Task Force is included EDWA's existing Water Resources Management Plan (WRDMP) budget. County costs would be limited to minimal staff time associated with participation in the Task Force.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

The workplan for implementation of SB 552 requirements supports the Economic Development priority of "promote and expand agriculture, recreation, and tourism and their related businesses" and the Infrastructure priority of "analyze need, coordinate and plan for County facilities, parks, and trails including ongoing maintenance, operations, and replacement."

CONTACT

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