

Response to Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report:

Managing Regional Water Supplies

Report Summary

- Published June 13, 2017
- The Grand Jury released their “Managing Regional Water Supplies”, which contains the results of their review of the current management of the regional water resources.
- Both the Board of Supervisors and the Water Agency are named as responders.

Report Summary continued

- The Board of Supervisors are named as a responder to Findings 1, 2, & 6, as well as Recommendations 1, 2b, & 6.
- The Water Agency is named as a responder to Findings 1, 5, 6, & 9 as well as Recommendations 1, 5, 6, & 9.

Finding 1

- “No single entity has decision or enforcement power within Santa Barbara County to lead regional planning.
- Both the Board of Supervisors and the Water Agency Board agree with this finding.

Recommendation 1

- “That the Santa Barbara County Water Agency be designated as the permanent lead agency of the Santa Barbara County Cooperating Partners and granted enforcement power to ensure reliability of Santa Barbara County water supplies”.
- The recommendation will not be implemented.
 - The County Water Agency has no statutory authority over the various water purveyors in the County, unless and until the authority were to change, this recommendation is not feasible. Legislation at the State level would be needed, or the purveyors would have to agree in writing to grant the Agency this authority which currently has a low likelihood of occurring.

Finding 2

- “Additional supply sources such as desalination and recycled water are available to localized agencies but there is no concerted effort to develop them regionally.

The Board of Supervisors agree with the finding.

Recommendation 2a

- “That Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, in conjunction with San Luis Obispo County, explore the Diablo Canyon desalination plant as a source of water.”

The recommendation has been implemented:

- In previous Board meetings, the Board has expressed a desire to explore a cooperative effort with San Luis Obispo County and directed Staff to explore this option further. County staff have toured the Diablo Desalination facility, engaged in a regional desalination proposal with San Luis Obispo County (SLOC) Public Works officials and, then Chair, Supervisor Adam, and County staff toured the newly constructed Carlsbad Desalination facility in San Diego County. Representatives of Poseidon Water (developer of the Carlsbad Plant) attended a Santa Barbara County Water Purveyor Meeting in January 2017 to outline their development process. SLO County Staff were at this meeting as well.

Finding 5

- “Critical pipeline infrastructure, including redundancy, has not been developed throughout southern Santa Barbara County.”

The Water Agency Board agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 5

- “That critical pipeline infrastructure, including redundancy, be developed throughout southern Santa Barbara County.”

The recommendation will not be implemented:

- The Board understands and agrees with the Recommendation of the Grand Jury, but the County Water Agency is not the entity to undertake this action. The Cachuma Operations and Maintenance Board (COMB) is a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) consisting of the South Coast Cachuma Purveyors and is the entity that operates and maintains the South Coast Conduit.

Finding 6

- “Funding under Propositions 50, 84, and 1E has not yet been granted to the County of Santa Barbara for the Cooperating Partners of Santa Barbara Integrated Regional Water Management’s prioritized list of water supply projects.”

Both the Board of Supervisors and the Water Agency Board agree with the finding:

- While the County and the County Water Agency has received funding under these Propositions in the past, the most recent list of prioritized water supply/drought projects has not yet been funded.

Recommendation 6

- “That the funding applied for by the County of Santa Barbara on behalf of the Cooperating Partners of Santa Barbara County Integrated Regional Water Management is actively pursued.”

The recommendation has been implemented.

- The County Office of Emergency Management in conjunction with Senator Hannah Beth Jackson, Assemblywoman Monique Limon, the State Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES), and the County Water Agency held a series of meetings on this issue to work together to deliver the State a list of projects for better water reliability. That action, along with an on-going process within the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to apply for funding continues.

Finding 9

- “None of the Santa Barbara County south coast water purveyors has established capital replacement accounts.”
- The Water Agency Board lacks the information necessary to agree or disagree with this finding, therefore, pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05(a), the Board responds to this finding by partially agreeing and partially disagreeing. The Board does not have the financial information from each of the south coast water purveyors to determine if any purveyors have established a capital replacement account and is not aware of any separately established accounts.

Recommendation 9

- “That each Santa Barbara County south coast water purveyor establish and fund a restricted capital replacement account.”

The recommendation will not be implemented.

- The Board understands and agrees with the Recommendation of the Grand Jury, but the County Water Agency is not the entity to undertake this action. Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05(c) the recommendation addresses budgetary matters over which the Board has no decision-making authority. Therefore, while the Board agrees with the Recommendation, it will not be able to implement the Recommendation, but will encourage the purveyors to implement the Recommendation.

Recommended Actions:

- a) Consider and adopt responses in Attachment A as the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury report entitled "Managing Regional Water Supplies, Are There Better Solutions?", Attachment C;
- b) Consider and adopt responses in Attachment B as the Water Agency Board of Directors' response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury report entitled "Managing Regional Water Supplies, Are There Better Solutions?", Attachment C;
- c) Authorize the Chair to sign the letter included in Attachments A & B and forward the letters and responses to the Presiding Judge of Santa Barbara County Superior Court; and
- d) Determine pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15378(b)(5) that the above actions are not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act review because they are organizational or administrative activities that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.