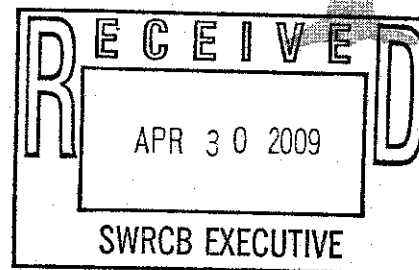


City of Ukiah

April 30, 2009

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
1001 I Street, 14th Floor
Sacramento, CA. 95814

Email: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov



**Re: Comment Letter: Sonoma County Water Agency Temporary
Urgency Change Petition Workshop**

CITY OF UKIAH COMMENTS FOR MAY 6 WORKSHOP

Dear Water Board Members and Staff:

The City of Ukiah appreciates the critical need this summer to reduce Russian River diversions. Storage in Lake Mendocino is at an historically low level and must be carefully conserved to maintain adequate flows in the river during the summer and for the fall run of Chinook Salmon. The City also recognizes that various changes in weather patterns and management of the Upper Russian River watershed make it necessary to adopt measures to reduce water use generally.

Below, under the heading Water Conservation Program 2009, the City describes what it has done, is currently doing and what it intends to pursue long-term to achieve these goals.

At its meeting on April 15, 2009, the City Council declared a local emergency under the Emergency Services Act and a Water Shortage Emergency under its City ordinance. The resolutions require reports at each City Council meeting until October 1, on the measures being used to reduce Russian River water diversions and water use, the effectiveness of those measures and additional proposals to further reduce water use.

The City also has some questions and comments about the proposed order to the Sonoma County Water Agency.

1. How did the State Board determine that the water conservation goal for Mendocino County should be 50%? That is a severe reduction which will inevitably cause significant property damage to landscaping. Such a reduction may be necessary to cope with the reduced supply. However, if it isn't, private property owners should be given much more notice and time to plan a transition to landscaping that is drought tolerant. The City should have more discretion in dealing with the reduced storage in Lake Mendocino, such as developing groundwater sources that won't directly impact the flow in the Russian River this summer and in judging the level of reduction needed to keep use within the available supply.

Such a severe reduction in use will also impact the revenue of the City's water system. Use is already down over 2004 levels by as much as 13% during the summer months, which are the

highest revenue months. Because of Proposition 218, the City cannot increase water rates quickly. The City should not be forced to reduce water use this summer more than is actually necessary to adequately husband the water stored in Lake Mendocino. It has currently undertaken a rate study, but the results of that study and proceedings to increase the rates will not be completed by this summer.

2. Why is the conservation goal for Mendocino County 50%, but only 25% for the Upper Russian river drainage in Sonoma County above Dry Creek? Both areas rely on Lake Mendocino for summer flows. While there are more tributary streams in Sonoma County, none of them contribute significant flows during the summer. It would seem that the conservation goal for both areas should be the same.

3. The order did not specify how the percentage reduction in water use will be measured. The City urges the Board to base the comparison on 2004 use, as it did in its previous order. The City efforts described below have resulted in a 13% reduction in water use, as compared to 2004, and has reduced diversions from the Russian River by as much as 25% during the summer. If the 50% reduction is measured against the City's use last summer, the effect is to require a 63% reduction in water use and as much as a 75% reduction in Russian River diversions. While the City does not know the rationale for the 50% figure, setting a conservation goal of 63% over 2004 usage is excessive and unnecessary.

The City of Ukiah
Water Conservation Program
2009

The unpredictability of its water supplies and ever increasing demand on California's complex water resources have resulted in a coordinated effort by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), water utilities, environmental organizations, and other interested groups to develop a list of urban water conservation demand management measures (DMM) for conserving water. This consensus building effort resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Regarding Urban Water Conservation in California, as amended September 16, 1999, among parties, which formalizes an agreement to implement these DMMs and makes a cooperative effort to reduce the consumption of California's water resources. The MOU is administered by the California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC). The DMMs as defined in the MOU are generally recognized as standard definitions of water conservation measures.

I. CUWCC Demand Management Measures Implemented

The existing conservation The City of Ukiah has had a water conservation program in place since the late 1970's. During the past five years, the City has expanded its program and public outreach. The City reduced the amount of water it used by over 9.3% in 2007 and 11.4% in 2008 compared to 2004.

Currently, the City's conservation program includes the following DMMs:

DMM 1. Water survey programs for single-family residential and multi-family residential connections.

The City tests customer meters upon request and instructs customers in how to use their water meter to determine if there is a leak on the demand side of the meter. The City provides toilet leak detection tablets to customers.

DMM 3. System water audits, leak detection, and repair.

The City performs leak detection and repair on an ongoing basis. The City, also, calculates system water losses annually and reports this information to DWR.

DMM 4. Metering with commodity rates for all new connections and retrofit of existing connections.

The City water distribution system is fully metered. The City is currently replacing old meters in the system. The new meters will provide a more accurate reading of water use within the City. The City recently went through a rate re-structuring that is believed will reduce water uses in the future.

DMM 5. Large landscape conservation programs and incentives.

The City's Planning Department reviews all landscape plans proposed for new developments. Included in the City's Municipal Code is a requirement for all landscape planting to be "those which grow well in Ukiah's climate without extensive irrigation." City staff reviews the water use of its top 5 water users and holds meetings with them on a regular basis to discuss landscape conservation programs.

DMM 7. Public information programs.

The City believes public awareness of water conservation issues is an important factor in ensuring a reliable water supply. The City promotes public awareness of water conservation through occasional bill stuffers, distribution of the Consumer Confidence Report, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, the City of Ukiah's "Activity and Recreation Guide", distribution of brochures and additional information at local expositions and fairs, and on the City website advertised to the community on a banner across a City thoroughfare. The City also provides free of charge water conservation yard signs to encourage minimal use of water for lawn irrigation.

Water conservation information and assistance is routinely provided to the public by the water utility maintenance staff and meter readers while in the field. Field staff receives conservation training to better assist customers and promote conservation. Door hangers are used to remind customers of Ukiah's Voluntary Water Conservation Program measures and to provide notice of problems with outdoor water use.

DMM 8. School education programs.

City staff presents information on water conservation to elementary school children in the classroom. The City offers local schools tours of its water treatment plant and also provides educational materials. Four science classes on public water supply at the high school are offered once a year.

DMM 9. Conservation programs for commercial, industrial, and institutional accounts.

The City has only two industrial customers: Maverick Industries and Red Tail Ale Brewery. The City surveys the water usage of these industries. Any new commercial, industrial, or institutional developments will be reviewed by the City Planning Department and must meet all requirements of the Municipal Code.

DMM 11. Conservation pricing.

In 2005, the City increased and re-structured its water rates to encourage more conservation. The City has simplified its rate structure by eliminating rate codes and classifying customers according to their meter size. The new rate structure incorporates the American Water Works Association (AWWA) demand capacity guidelines so that price increases across meter size in proportion to the potential demand a customer can place on the water system.

DMM 12. Conservation Coordinator.

The City's Conservation Coordinator is essential to sustaining and improving Ukiah's ongoing water conservation program. The conservation coordinator is responsible for implementing and monitoring the City's water conservation activities. In practice, the City's water conservation program includes the efforts of the Conservation Coordinator and all staff.

DMM 13. Water waste prohibition.

The City has adopted regulations that state in part: "Where negligent or wasteful use of water exists on a customer's premises... the City may discontinue the service..." (City Municipal Code Article 7, Section 3571). The City first sends customers a letter calling their attention to the wasteful practice and asking for correction. If the condition is not corrected within five days after the written notice, service may be discontinued if necessary.

DMM 14. Residential ULFT replacement programs.

Since October 1992, the sale of toilets using more than 1.6 gallons per flush has been prohibited by State and Federal regulations. These regulations are enforced in the City.

II. Additional Water Conservation Measures

In addition to the DMMs, the City has also taken the following actions:

1. Installation of five waterless urinals in the Ukiah Civic Center to support and promote the use of waterless urinals in all City facilities and in the public sector. The use of these urinals has received very positive feedback from Facilities staff who would like to install these in the Ukiah Valley Conference Center.
2. Cooperative water conservation programs have been developed between the City and the Mendocino County Water Agency, the Russian River Public Water Agencies, and the Sonoma County Water Agency.
3. The Ukiah City Council adopted the Ahwahnee Water Principles on April 4, 2007. The Principles contain ideas for protecting and enhancing water quality, improving water availability, making more efficient use of water, and conserving water as a scarce resource. The Principles suggest a process for improving decision-making as it impacts

water-related issues. The City Council reviewed the Principles and determined the ideas and suggestions promote the Council's stated goals.

III. Future Water Conservation Activities

The City has recently undertaken a rate and revenue study of its water utility. A tiered inclining block rate structure and excess use charge are being evaluated to encourage water conservation.

The City has submitted a pre-application to the State Water Resources Control Board State Revolving Fund to construct a recycled water system. The City's Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project is scheduled to be completed by June 2009. After the project is completed, the plant will be capable of producing 2 million gallons per day (MGD) in the summer and up to 7.5 MGD in the winter of Title 22 unrestricted use recycled water.

Other immediate and long-term conservation measures include:

- Installation of waterless urinals and dual flush toilets in all City buildings (immediate)
- Sign the California Urban Water Conservation Council's Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Urban Water Conservation and implement the 14 best management practices (long term)
- Water efficiency standards for new single-family development (long term)
- Water-efficient landscaping (long term)
- Water waste ordinance prohibiting: (immediate)
 1. gutter flooding
 2. carwash fundraisers
 3. non-recycling decorative water fountains
 4. breaks or leaks in the water delivery system
- Incentives for Retrofits (long term)
 1. low flow shower heads
 2. toilet displacement devices
 3. toilet flappers
 4. faucet aerators
 5. high efficiency washing machines
 6. ultra-low flow toilets

Respectfully submitted,


Jane Chambers
City Manager

cc: City Council