

ACONA Meeting Notes

May 24, 2022

After introductions, the following topics were presented.

Statewide Drought: Supplies and Conservation Actions

Speakers:

Nina Jazmadarian, General Manager, Foothill Municipal Water District (FMWD)

Mel Matthews, General Manager, Kinneloa Irrigation

FMWD is a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District. Rising temperatures have an effect on hydrology. The driest three consecutive years on record are 2020-2022; thus we have only a 5% state water allocation. Lake Powell is at extremely low levels, so water release into Lake Mead is limited, which affects water allocation to the states. Lower water levels have an impact on hydroelectric production as well. Demand is 1.86 million acre feet in Southern California. Current supply is 1 million acre feet (i.e., short by 864 thousand acre feet); 643 thousand acre feet of that can be fulfilled by the MWD. FMWD agencies have gone down to 1-2 days/week watering. Non-functional turf: just used for decoration (e.g., in front of businesses) recommended not to be irrigated or to be replaced. FMWD has asked for Stage IV conservation actions (lawn watering, fixing leaks, washing vehicles with bucket water instead of a hose, not filling ornamental ponds). MWD also offers rebates (see slides for a list; see Resources for links), including rebates for turf replacement. FMWD also has rebates for spray to drip conversion and will do a residential water audit at no cost.

Mel: Kinneloa is an unincorporated county area not part of Altadena; serves Kinneloa mesa and part of Pasadena. Gets 100% of its water from groundwater from its wells and water tunnels, but has six interconnections with Pasadena if needed for emergencies. Still promote conservation because if they have to import water, costs to customers go up. Most of the water used (up to 80%) is for outdoor irrigation. Because they are in an extreme wildfire hazard area, don't want customers to stop watering, though watering has been reduced to 2 days/week. Customers can reduce water use by converting to drought-tolerant landscaping and fire-resistant vegetation, using drip irrigation, installing weather-based irrigation controllers (and know how to operate their controllers).

What the County Offers about Setting Up Small Businesses

Speaker: Ernesto Bobadilla, Acting Chief, Office of Small Business, LA County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs

In the process of realigning services into a Department of Economic Opportunity, which will be launched in July. Provide assistance to launch a business, pro an existing business, certifying businesses for operation in LA County. There is a Small Business Commission within the department that does advocacy. (See Resources for links to some of the services provided. Other links are in the slides.)

Q&A

Q: What areas receive recycled water? How are plans coming that would put recycled water to use on parks, soccer fields and golf courses? A: La Canada Golf Course is one. Pasadena is looking at recycling water again — would put the recycled water into the groundwater base for additional filtration. Part of the problem is installing a separate piping system for recycled water (expensive).

Q: How much water is reserved for fire-fighting and where does it come from? A: In Kinneloa it comes from their reservoirs (i.e., the same water as customers receive). Retail agencies systems are designed to fight home fires, not wildfires. Kinneloa has 4 million gallons of storage that is filled by local groundwater. In emergencies, additional water is supplied from interconnections with Pasadena.

Q: Compared to 10 years ago, we're using half the water we did then.

Realistically, don't know if we can decrease use any more. Agriculture gets water at subsidized rates. There's plenty of water if we stop growing crops in the desert. Almond trees have economic benefit, but Mother Jones says it takes three gallons of water to grow one almond. A: The subsidy is federally funded.

Agriculture does have economic benefits. On the Colorado River side: Law of the river. Higher priority water rights. The first agency that would be cut once Colorado River water is cut would be the MWD. MWD is paying for fallowing of farmlands. Central valley is sinking because they've exhausted their groundwater. Mel: A lot of commercial agricultural irrigation has been converted to drip irrigation.

Comment: Almonds are native to the deserts of Iran. They are suitable for drylands farming. Crops are watered more than they might [really] need in hopes of better yields.

Q: Are there any plans to provide landlords with information to give to their renters about saving water? I am surprised how many people I talk with have very little idea about their personal need to conserve water. A: There is some effort.

Comment from Nic Arnzen (CT4602): My Communication Committee is currently creating a "New Neighbor Welcome Pack." We hope to include landlords and renters.

Q: Why are we not stopping people from selling bottled water? Would it help to cut that out? A: It would help the environment. Mel: It's a matter of economics. We don't understand why people buy bottled water since the groundwater tastes fine and bottled water is much more expensive.

Q: If people need small business services do they need to go to the East LA center? A: They can schedule a virtual appointment. Counselors follow up with an email with instructions after the appointment.

Q: Why do we flush toilets with potable water? A: There are designs where a sink for washing hands is behind the toilet and that water feeds into the toilet tank.

Mel: Any systems that use gray water save potable water. (For irrigation, for example.)

Q: Is there material from the water districts that can be provided to new neighbors/renters? Is there some water conservation material we can include? A: FWMD probably has something. Kinneloa has materials as well.

Q: Other than rain barrels, is there any support for creating curb cutting, swales and hugelkulturs to capture the rainwater we do get and have it soak into the ground at each residence? A: No, but you may be able to include that with a turf rebate. LA Rivers used to have a curb cuts program, so that may be another option.

Comment: In the news: State Water Board adopts ban on watering some green spaces as drought drags on: <https://abc7.com/california-water-restrictions-drought-conservation/11889324/>