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Planning, Building and Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.co.napa.ca.us

Main: (707) 253-4417
Fax: (707) 253-4336

David Morrison
Director

MEMORANDUM

To:	DWSTF Members	From:	Jamison Crosby, Natural Resources Conservation Manager Planning, Building, and Environmental Services
Date:	April 22, 2022	Re:	Purpose of the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force (DWSTF) and SB 552

Purpose

In simplest terms the purpose of the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force (DWSTF) is to develop a plan to assist Napa County residents whose domestic wells have run dry. The task force is not tasked with developing a plan for irrigation or commercial wells.

Background

Napa County records indicate there are approximately 4,554 domestic wells and 136 public supply wells in the county.

DWR maintains a database where residents can report occurrences of dry wells at <https://mydrywell.water.ca.gov/report/>. The link is also posted to Napa County's Groundwater Sustainability webpage here: <https://www.countyofnapa.org/3074/Groundwater-Sustainability>

At the present time, there have been a total of 6 reports of dry wells in Napa County in the last year and 13 reports since tracking began in 2014 of which 4 were resolved. All dry wells reported to DWR in Napa County were characterized as household or combination household/agricultural wells.

As compared with other counties, Napa has a low incidence of domestic wells going dry. The highest numbers in the state were reported in Fresno County which had 178 dry wells (of all types) in the last year. Sonoma County, Lake County and Solano Counties had 6, 30 and 2 reports, respectively, in the last year.

While it's possible there were additional dry wells in Napa County that were not reported the DWR, it does appear as if the frequency of domestic wells going dry is low. However, as Napa is in its third year of drought the frequency of dry wells could increase. It is within this context that Senator Hertzberg drafted SB 552.

SB 552 (Hertzberg)

Existing law declares that small water suppliers and rural communities are often not covered by established water shortage requirements, and that the state should provide guidance to improve drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities. Existing law required the Department of Water Resources, in consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board and other relevant state and local agencies and stakeholders, to use available data to identify, no later than January 1, 2020, small water suppliers and rural communities that may be at risk of drought and water shortage vulnerability. To implement this directive, DWR formed a stakeholder advisory group, the County Drought Advisory Group. Existing law required DWR, in consultation with the State Board, to propose to the Governor and the Legislature, by January 1, 2020, recommendations and guidance relating to the development and implementation of countywide drought and water shortage contingency plans to address the planning needs of small water suppliers and rural communities, as provided.

Senate Bill 552 (Hertzberg), as codified in California Water Code Section 10609.50 et seq., was passed with the intention of requiring counties to anticipate dry wells and develop a plan to respond.

SB 551 requires the following:

1. All counties shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction, and shall invite representatives from the state and other local governments, including groundwater sustainability agencies, and community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents, to participate in the task force.
2. A county that establishes a drought task force on or before January 1, 2022, shall be deemed in compliance with this subdivision as long as the task force continues to exist. Napa County Board of Supervisors created the DWSTF on December 13, 2021.
3. Counties shall develop a plan that includes potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The plan may be a stand-alone document or may be included as an element in an existing county plan, such as a local hazard mitigation plan, emergency operations plan, climate action plan, or general

plan. A county shall consult with its drought task force or alternative coordinating process as established by this section in developing its plan.

4. The plan shall consider, at a minimum, all of the following:

- a. Consolidations for existing water systems and domestic wells.
- b. Domestic well drinking water mitigation programs.
- c. Provision of emergency and interim drinking water solutions.
- d. An analysis of the steps necessary to implement the plan.
- e. An analysis of local, state, and federal funding sources available to implement the plan.

WICC as the Core of DWSTF

In receiving directives from the state that necessitate the creation of new boards and committees, staff consider many factors, not the least of which is the potential overlap with an existing committee. In this case, staff determined the Watershed Information and Conservation Committee's (WICC) mission statement ("Improving the health of Napa County's watersheds by informing, engaging and fostering partnerships within the community") was generally aligned with the purpose of the DWSTF.

During discussion of the update to the Strategic Plan at the July 22, 2021, meeting, some members expressed interest in the WICC play a stronger role in making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, while others indicated interest in taking on more of an analytical role. Other members spoke of the need to take a broader view of the watershed, to include more than surface flows. As a result, staff discussed the need for a DWSTF with the WICC at their regularly scheduled meeting of October 28, 2021. The WICC expressed broad interest in continuing its current mission, but also serving in an expanded role as the DWSTF. They recommended a structure similar to the Planning Commission, where with additional members, they also serve as the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC).

DWSTF Work Products and Timing

Working with staff and consultants in a public forum, the Task Force will submit initial recommended actions to address domestic well drinking water mitigation programs and the provision of emergency and interim drinking water solutions as soon as possible and a recommended Drought and Water Shortage Plan (DWSP) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration on or about May 1, 2023.