

City of Seal Beach



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August 28, 2023

The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report – Historic Rain, Yet Drought Remains:

Dear Judge Hernandez:

This letter serves as the City of Seal Beach's response to the Grand Jury Report titled "Historic Rain, Yet Drought Remains".

Following are the City's responses to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations:

FINDINGS

F.1: Future water supplies are impacted by climate change and current supplies will not meet future demands.

The City partially disagrees with the finding. The City finds this statement to be overly generalized and does not represent various agencies' water supply conditions.

F.2: Climatologists predict future extended periods of low moisture with occasional wet years.

The City partially disagrees with the finding. The City does not have the expertise to respond to F2.

F.3: Climate change is inevitable and is exacerbated by human behavior.

The City partially disagrees with the finding. The City does not have the expertise to respond to F3.

F.4: South Orange County relies primarily on the importation of water.

The City agrees with the finding. While the City of Seal Beach is not situated in South Orange County and may not share the same water management practices, it is our understanding that South Orange County generally relies on import water.

F5. Local water suppliers recognize that enhanced stormwater capture and storage, wastewater recycling, and infrastructure improvements will not be sufficient to address the long-term forecast of drought and its effect on water supply.

The City agrees with this finding. While F5 is a generalized statement, the City generally concurs that the F5 noted infrastructure improvements, alone, will not be adequate in addressing long-term needs; however, said improvements should not be ignored all together.

F6. There is significant water infrastructure planning, but inadequate implementation.

The City partially disagrees with the finding. F6 is a generalized statement where it does not illustrate the various agencies' infrastructure practices. Specific to the City of Seal Beach, lack of resources does contribute to slower than desirable implementation.

F7. The review and approval process for major water capital projects is cumbersome and overly restrictive.

The City agrees with this finding. Developing water capital projects can be improved if (1) adequate resources are available, and (2) the amount of environmental and regulatory requirements can be streamlined.

F8. Failing to find solutions to water shortages will have significant impact on the Orange County economy.

The City agrees with this finding.

F9. Continued development in Orange County creates additional water supply needs.

The City agrees with this finding.

F10. Conservation and efficient use of water is essential.

The City agrees with this finding.

F11. Increased outreach and public education are necessary.

The City agrees with this finding. Smarter solutions to broadcast water education are useful; however, it should not be mandated or cause undue financial burden to the water agencies.

F12. Desalination has proven to be technologically and environmentally feasible and is slowly being embraced as a drought-resistant source of water.

The City agrees with this finding. Desalination could have the potential to be a viable water supply source.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R2. Orange County water agencies should expedite the planning, development, and construction of desalination plants over the next five years to ensure a sustainable and reliable drought-resistant source of water.

The recommendation will not be implemented by the City of Seal Beach. The City of Seal Beach supports water supply resiliency alternatives, if they are compatible with specific agency needs and in compliance with applicable laws and policies. The City is unable to provide an implementation schedule because the development of desalination plants relies on other stakeholders and jurisdictions such that their development is best addressed at the regional level.

- R3. The County of Orange and all Orange County cities should formulate an emergency development moratorium plan in anticipation of the Colorado River water supply being constrained. The emergency moratorium plan should be developed by the end of the calendar year 2023.

The recommendation requires further analysis. Water agencies are required to prepare an Urban Water Management Plan that evaluates present and future water supply sources. Municipal Water District of Orange County has recently completed the 2023 Orange County Reliability Study. Introduction of new mandates need to be supported by these and other similar documents. The City is unable to provide an implementation schedule because the recommendation relies on other stakeholders and jurisdictions where it is best addressed at the regional and State level.

- R4. Orange County water agencies should update their public communication strategies, by calendar year 2023, to inform the public of lifestyle changes if additional water sources are not developed.

The recommendation has been implemented. R4 is overly generalized where each water agencies' existing outreach practices varies. Nevertheless, the City of Seal Beach has a water conservation communication plan in place.

Any questions on this response sheet can be directed to the City's Director of Public Works, Iris Lee. Additionally, Ms. Lee is available to be contacted by cities and/or special districts related to this, or other general Public Works items. She can best be reached at: ilee@sealbeachca.gov.

Sincerely,



Thomas Moore, Mayor
City of Seal Beach