

MOTION

In the Southwestern United States the first 3 months of 2022 were the driest months ever recorded in a century, with just six inches of precipitation observed across the Sierra Nevadas. Major indicators that add context are also quite stark: California statewide precipitation for water year to date is 73% below average, and important reservoirs from other watersheds, such as Lake Mead, have dropped to unprecedented lows amid this climate-exacerbated drought.

To address this new era of water scarcity, Council should look at strategies and policies that conserve, capture and reuse as much water as possible, offsetting potable water usage and needs. Under state regulations, gray-water is defined as untreated wastewater that has not been contaminated by toilet waste or other unhealthy bodily wastes. Gray water systems can vary, but are all for the sole purpose of offsetting potable water usage. Recently, the City/County of San Francisco adopted an expansive gray-water ordinance, demonstrating that other big cities have followed similar water saving efforts.

The City has already been focused on recycling water for some time. The Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) for example, which manages 16000+ acres of parkland over 440+ park sites, has reduced water usage over 50% since 2004. RAP has gone from using approximately 4.1 billion gallons of water to just over 1.8 billion as of 2016. Additionally, RAP has also partnered with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and the Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) to further convert potable water irrigation systems into recycled water purple pipe irrigation systems. The Council directed the LADWP and LASAS to examine making more effective use of the water cleaned at the Hyperion Water Treatment Plant (CF#14-0078-S5), as well as explore the potential for directing to storm drains water produced through dewatering activities (CF#14-0078-S6). The Department of Water and Power, working in collaboration with the Bureau of Streets Services' Urban Forestry Division (UFD), and other partners, should report on the coordination necessary to deliver 100% recycled water for tree irrigation on city rights-of-way.

Water conservation may have potential impacts on the City's infrastructure for conveyance of wastewater and stormwater. The sewer system conveys wastewater for treatment at water reclamation plants, and the stormwater system conveys rainwater runoff during storms, as well as flows from sprinklers and other outdoor water uses from residential or commercial developments during dry weather. Both systems are important, but operate independently. The LA sewer system is vast: 6,700 miles of sewers, 42 sewer pumping plants, and 4 water reclamation plants - the largest system of its kind in the United States. Similarly, the LA stormwater system is also immense - coupled with the LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD), the overall system is responsible for controlling untreated water flows into the ocean through 2,919 miles of underground storm drain infrastructure.

Any major effort at water recycling from developments, future or current, could greatly impact both the wastewater system and the stormwater system. Additionally, since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, any water discharge into a body of water must have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. In the early 2000s, total maximum daily loads (TMDL) were first articulated to address specific pollutants that cause impairments in bodies of water. The inclusion of TMDLs into the NPDES permits for the stormwater system (also known as MS4 permits) has justifiably upgraded the definitions and requirements for compliance.



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In the early 2000s, the City began focusing on building “Low Flow Diversions (LFDs)” by diverting runoff from the stormwater system into sewer lines. Successful implementation of this strategy has allowed the County of Los Angeles to follow the City’s lead, further offsetting bacterial contamination into the ocean. Any initiative focused on the creation of a gray-water requirement should also focus on low flow diversions, improving the region’s connectivity while addressing federal compliance issues related to stormwater runoff. The Council must take this opportunity to report on greatly expanding this program.

In 2016, Council adopted an ordinance under Council File 15-0458, which resulted in major updates and upgrades to gray-water systems. Further work is required to conserve and reuse every drop of water possible. At the same time, the City must take the opportunity to focus on cleaning up non-treated water that ends up contaminating our oceans.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Sanitation, and the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, with the Assistance of the City Attorney and the Chief Legislative Analyst, in consultation with the Los Angeles-Orange County Building Trades Council, report back with recommendations for gray-water reuse systems on-site for new developments above 100,000 SQ FT based on water use, requiring non-potable water uses for indoor and outdoor purposes, and then conveying the final water produced by dewatering into the sewer, including but not limited to:

- A process for the implementation of the ordinance and/or regulatory framework, by building type, including outreach to commercial, industrial, and residential stakeholders
- Recommendations to ensure that any policy and ordinance adoption does not place the economic burden on housing, especially low-income tenants or contribute to housing destabilization or community displacement pressures, and is a benefit for water affordability
- Recommendations on staffing needs to implement and oversee this policy

I FURTHER MOVE that the Department of Water and Power, with the assistance of the Bureau of Street Services’ Urban Forestry Division, report to Council with a plan and recommendations for the coordination of current contractors and city staff, towards the goal of 100% irrigation of trees on the public rights-of-way.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Bureau of Sanitation include in their report to Council, impacts that a gray water ordinance will have on the wastewater and stormwater systems within the City, and that this report includes financial and infrastructure recommendations to increase storm drain water flows into the wastewater system, including through dewatering practices, in order to increase compliance with the regional “MS4” permit.

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