



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Second District

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Third District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

**DATE:** April 10, 2024

**08**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### SUBJECT

**ADOPT A RESOLUTION TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT GRANT FUNDS FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES COUNTY DROUGHT RESILIENCE PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### OVERVIEW

Senate Bill 552 (SB 552), passed and signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in September 2021, requires State and local governments to share responsibility for preparing and acting in the case of a water shortage event. These new requirements are expected to improve the ability of Californians to manage future droughts and help prevent catastrophic impacts to drinking water for communities vulnerable to climate change impacts. The bill outlines the new requirements for small water suppliers, county governments, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the State Water Board to implement more proactive drought planning and be better prepared for future water shortage events or dry years. Each county is required to have a standing drought task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems (serving 5 to 14 connections), domestic wells, and other privately supplied homes within the county's jurisdiction. Each county must also develop a plan demonstrating the potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county.

Following SB 552, DWR launched the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program which aimed to provide up to \$125,000 in financial assistance or direct technical assistance to access one-time support to establish a standing Drought and Water Shortage Task Force and develop a County Drought Resilience Plan. As a result, the County of San Diego (County) Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) analyzed 13 parks that currently have small water systems to determine the eligibility of funding based on the grant requirements. Out of the parks analyzed, DPR identified the following four parks as the most qualified parks for the DWR County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program: El Monte County Park, Oakoasis County Preserve, Santa Margarita County Preserve, and Louis A. Stelzer County Park. These parks support the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program requirements as these parks are part of DPR's County Drought Resilience Plan and the grant funding would cover the remainder of the County's design consultant costs required to advance design of recommended improvement plans from 30 percent completion to final construction documents. The design documents will include

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improvements to potable and non-potable water tanks, distribution lines, well pumps, pressure tanks and/or chlorination systems to prevent catastrophic failures and reestablish high quality and reliable water services at these locations.

This request is to adopt a Resolution authorizing DPR to apply for and accept up to \$125,000 from DWR's County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program to complete the improvement plans for four qualified sites. The total estimated cost of the improvement plans is \$400,000. Funds for this request are partially included in Fiscal Year 2024-25 Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Recommended Operational Plan of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Additionally, this request will authorize the Director, DPR, or designee, to conduct all negotiations and to execute and submit all documents that may be necessary to apply for and accept the grant funds.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the adoption of the Resolution is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Adopt a Resolution entitled: RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR GRANT FUNDS FOR COUNTY DROUGHT RESILIENCE PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
3. Authorize the Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, or designee, as agent of the County, to conduct all negotiations and submit all documents including, but not limited to, application, contracts, payment requests and to execute the grant agreement, including any extension or amendments thereof that do not materially impact or alter the grant program or funding levels.

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed small water system improvement plans will serve the unincorporated communities of Lakeside and Fallbrook. Upon the completion of the improvement plans, the implementation of the recommendations made for these parks will provide clean water to both day users and overnight campers and eliminate catastrophic impacts in the event of drought or failed water infrastructure. The improvements will enable the Department of Parks and Recreation to continue to offer active and passive recreational activities to the residents of these regions.

Currently, El Monte County Park, Oakoasis County Preserve, Santa Margarita County Preserve, and Louis A. Stelzer County Park are located within disadvantaged communities according to the Healthy Places Index (HPI) and have low park accessibility. In addition to low park accessibility, these census tracts have a higher susceptibility to health inequities and lack outdoor greenspaces. They are also disproportionately exposed to climate change risks such as building loss, wildfires, and legacy pollution, underscoring that maintaining water services at these parks and preserves are even more crucial for the well-being of both residents and park users alike.

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### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed action of the Department of Parks and Recreation to accept grant funds through the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program will protect the demand of potable water in communities that depend on a small water system for their water supply. Such action supports County Sustainability Goal No. 5 by protecting groundwater quality and ensuring the availability of potable water in times of drought.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in Fiscal Year 2024-25 CAO Recommended Operational Plan of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). If approved, today's actions would authorize the submittal of one application for grant funds up to \$125,000 to the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program for costs associated with the completion of the ongoing Small Water System Emergency Action Improvement Plans. The total estimated cost of the improvement plans is \$400,000. The funding sources are existing General Purpose Revenue (GPR) in DPR (\$275,000) and if awarded, grant funds from the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program (\$125,000). If the grant is not awarded, the project scope will be adjusted. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

The Board approved a waiver of Board Policy B-29 for LUEG grants on June 24, 2020 (12); therefore, a waiver is not requested as part of this action. If a grant is awarded, any unrecovered cost per Board Policy B-29 would be funded by existing GPR in DPR as determined by the nature of the project(s) or program(s).

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

### **BACKGROUND**

Based on the challenges experienced in the 2012-2016 drought in California and increased frequency and severity of droughts exacerbated by climate change, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1668 and State Bill (SB) 606 in 2018 to establish a new framework for long-term water use efficiency and conservation in California. This framework included new requirements to strengthen local drought resilience for urban water suppliers and directed the improvement of drought planning of small water suppliers and rural communities. These communities vary widely in supply source reliability and organizational capacity and can be highly vulnerable to water shortages during droughts. SB 552 was passed in September 2021, establishing new responsibilities and requirements at both the State and local levels to help small water suppliers and rural communities reduce their risk of inadequate water supply during a water shortage event. Following SB 552, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) launched the County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program to provide one-time support to each California

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county for up to \$125,000 in financial assistance or direct technical assistance to establish a standing Drought and Water Shortage Task Force and develop a County Drought Resilience Plan.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 13 small water systems. These water systems serve the following day use/neighborhood parks/community parks and preserves: Agua Caliente County Park, El Monte County Park, Oakoasis County Preserve, Potrero County Park, Santa Margarita County Preserve, Louis A. Stelzer County Park, Vallecito County Park, Jess Martin County Park, Lake Morena County Park, Santa Ysabel Nature Center, Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch County Preserve, Wilderness Gardens County Preserve, and William Heise County Park. These locations serve an average of 9,000 monthly users and have one to three potable and/or non-potable water tanks that range in size from 5,000 gallons to 60,000 gallons that draw water from natural well water sources or natural springs. These small water systems, some of which were installed over 25 years ago, have surpassed their useful lives. The deferred maintenance on these small water systems has resulted in several emergency projects ranging from repair of failing tanks and well pumps to mandating boil water orders. These failures negatively impact water service reliability, quality, and the use of the facilities.

In 2023, DPR completed a Countywide Small Water System Emergency Action Plan Assessment which identified that eight of the thirteen parks showed extensive deterioration in their small water system: Agua Caliente County Park, El Monte County Park, Oakoasis County Preserve, Potrero County Park, Santa Margarita County Preserve, Louis A. Stelzer County Park, Vallecito County Park, and William Heise County Park. The purpose of the assessment was to perform preliminary reporting of existing conditions for each of the park's small water systems. The assessment included topographical and geotechnical reports, identification of electrical and mechanical components, plumbing, conceptual plans for a temporary tank, and general system site plans. Currently, DPR was able to complete 30 percent of the design plans for eight parks and plans to prepare final construction documents for El Monte County Park, Oakoasis County Preserve, Santa Margarita County Preserve, and Louis A. Stelzer County Park by the end of year 2025, supported by this grant funding, if approved.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

Today's action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines. Section 15061(b)(3) provides that a project is exempt from CEQA review where "it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment." If a project is developed, environmental review will be conducted prior to approval of the project. If the Board does not choose to proceed with the project, the grant funds will be returned. Therefore, it can be seen with certainty that the application for and acceptance of the grant funds will not have a significant effect on the environment.

#### **LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

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The proposed action to adopt a Resolution to apply for and accept grant funds, if awarded, supports the Sustainability Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan by promoting an environment where residents can enjoy parks, open spaces, and outdoor experiences.

Respectfully submitted,



DAHVIA LYNCH  
Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A - Qualifying Grant Parks Map

Attachment B - Resolution of the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors Approving the Application for Grant Funds for County Drought Resilience Planning Assistance Program