

Opinion

Op-ed

Water supply at a critical stage

By Supervisor Valerie Brown

Published:
Mon 3/9 7 PM

State water officials are warning of the most significant water crisis in California history. Even above-average rainfall this spring won't end the drought in Sonoma County.

The past two dry years, a dry winter so far this year, potential climate change impacts and the need to provide adequate flows to protect habitat for three fish species listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, will mean cutbacks in water deliveries.

The Sonoma County Water Agency has already declared a "dry year" and begun reducing releases from Lake Mendocino in accordance with existing regulations.

As a result, it is more important than ever for all of us to use water wisely and conserve wherever possible.

Fortunately, another water source that is environmentally wise, is growing in popularity and can help provide a sustainable new supply. It's recycled water.

Many recycled water programs already exist in Sonoma County. One of the newest is the North Bay Water Recycling Program, in which neighboring agencies in Sonoma, Napa and Marin counties are cooperating. It is an effort to expand the use of recycled water and increase the counties' ability to obtain state and federal funding for their projects. It is a regional approach that provides economies of scale for the necessary planning, engineering and environmental studies.

In Sonoma County, the North Bay Water Recycling Program is expanding the existing use of recycled water in Sonoma Valley to offset agriculture and urban usage, and also for several parks, including Arnold Park, Field of Dreams, the Plaza, Hughes Field, Depot Park and Ernie

Smith Park. The project would offset groundwater pumping in the areas where there is saline-water intrusion. In addition, recycled water from the North Bay Recycling Program would be used to assist in the restoration of the Napa Salt Marsh.

Water recycling,, like recycling cans, bottles and paper, is a smart and efficient use of resources. Recycled water can take pressure off our drinking-water supplies by providing reliable water supply for the irrigation of landscapes, agriculture lands, wetland restoration and stream flows for riparian habitat and fisheries recovery.

Recycled water has been used safely and effectively for decades throughout the region, state and nation, including irrigation for San Francisco's Golden Gate Park since 1932. Locally, it is used in Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Petaluma and Windsor. These uses have been proven safe and reliable for people as well as the environment.

Environmental studies are currently being conducted to analyze potential benefits and impacts associated with the North Bay Water Recycling Program.

A combined Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report will be available early in spring 2009. To learn more about this exciting new program, or to be placed on a list to receive more information, please visit the project Web site at www.nbwra.org or call us at 547-1923.

Expanding use of recycled water, coupled with water conservation, is critical for the water supply of our communities and the region. The North Bay Water Recycling Program is an important and sustainable part of the solution that will help us meet our current and future water-supply needs.

•••

Valerie Brown represents the 1st Supervisorial District, which includes Sonoma Valley.

Copyright © 2009 - sonomanews.com

[\[x\] Close Window](#)