

City of Cotati

Sonoma County, California



October 27, 2004

The Honorable Allan D. Hardcastle, Presiding Judge
Superior Court, State of California
800 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Re: 2003/04 Sonoma County Grand Jury Report
City File No. E04-11

Dear Judge Hardcastle:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the 2003/04 Grand Jury Report. In the report, the City is required to respond to two specific recommendations, R1 and R2, both pertaining to water resources. The responses are provided below.

R1. The county and each of its cities should adopt or amend a sustainable water element as part of their general plan with a target date of January 1, 2005, the adoption date of the next general plan.

Response to R1:

The City's General Plan was last adopted in 1998. At that time, the water element of the General Plan did not have a sustainable water element. The City has approved a budget for a General Plan Update for the current fiscal year and the General Plan process is scheduled to commence at the beginning of 2005. During this process the City will provide a sustainable water element as recommended in the Grand Jury Report. It is estimated that the updated General Plan will be approved and subsequently certified in 2007.

The City recognizes the significance of adopting a sustainable water element and for that reason believe that it is more important that the General Plan process be used in the development of the element and that the process be allowed to take its course. We respectfully acknowledge the target date of January 1, 2005 set by the Grand Jury but believe that the public process is crucial in developing this important water element. It is not possible to meet the target date given the City's schedule for the General Plan process.

Nevertheless, the City has done many things to ensure its water needs are met for its residents as well as its future residents. These actions are summarized below.

- 1. Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). Because of its size, the City is not required to prepare an urban water management plan. Even so, the City joined with the Sonoma County Water Agency, along with other water contractors, to prepare such a plan. The purpose of the UWMP is to project*

and plan for its water supply needs for a 20-year planning period. The UWMP was prepared in 2000 and a new plan will be prepared in 2005. The UWMP concluded that "...the water supplies available to the Agency's water transmission system, and to the eight water contractors that this plan covers, are adequate over the next 20-year planning period."

- 2. Water System Master Plan. The City updated its master plan in 2002. The master plan identified current water demands and projected its future water demands. Likewise, the master plan identified the City's water supply from its Sonoma County Water Agency source (i.e., Russian River water supply) and its local groundwater supplies. The plan projected that there are adequate supplies to meet the city's current and future water demands.*
- 3. Groundwater Management. The City has recently moved towards a groundwater management practice whereby water from the Russian River water supply is used to meet the city's water demands, to the maximum extent possible. The intent is to use the local groundwater supplies as a supplement during times of Sonoma County Water Agency transmission system impairment and Russian River water supply deficiency. This management practice allows the aquifer to recharge as much as possible. This practice has been effect during the past two years and will continue.*
- 4. California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The City became a signatory to the CUWCC memorandum of understanding in 2001. In doing so, the City agreed to follow water conservation best management practices as defined by the State and to be in compliance with the MOU. Since becoming a signatory to the MOU, the City has stepped up its water conservation program and has realized water savings as a result of the program. The City is committed to continuing its efforts in this area and has increased its program budget in order to more aggressively implement the various best management practices.*
- 5. Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Study. One of the issues facing Sonoma County is that of changing land use, increasing population and potential changes in water availability. Currently, the regional occurrence, yield, and quality of groundwater resources in the county are not well understood. It is the City's goal to develop new strategies for efficiently using its Russian River water and to link this supply to its groundwater use. In addition, this study will provide an up-to-date assessment of groundwater availability in Sonoma County including the degree to which poor quality groundwater affects supply. The City of Cotati has three municipal wells which are critical to its water supply system and recognizes the importance of this study.*

Because of the need to understand the groundwater resources where the City's wells are located, the City has agreed to participate in the funding of this groundwater study. The study is an extensive 5-year study conducted by the United State Geological Survey for the Santa Rosa Plain. The study area

generally includes the area encompassing Windsor to the north, Sebastopol to the west, Cotati to the east, and Penngrove to the south. All of the City's municipal wells are within the study area.

6. *Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment Program (GAMA)*. In addition to understanding the groundwater availability (see "Response to R1, item no. 5"), well users in the Santa Rosa Plain also need a comprehensive assessment of groundwater quality. The GAMA program is being conducted by the United State Geological Survey to provide that comprehensive assessment.

Because of the need to better understand the water quality of its groundwater resources where the City's wells are located, the City has agreed to allow its wells to be monitored, along with other wells in the area. The results will be included in the database for water quality data in the Santa Rosa Plain.

7. *Recycled Water Urban Reuse*. The City recognizes that an important component to a sustainable water policy includes the use of recycled water. The City is actively pursuing opportunities to use recycled water. To stand by this commitment, City Council has set aside annual funds to its Recycled Water Project as "seed money" for a viable project. While it has not yet identified a viable project, the City hopes to partner with another water agency, such as the City of Rohnert Park, the City of Santa Rosa, and/or the Sonoma County Water Agency, in order to realize its goal of using recycled water to help offset its potable water use.

R2. The county and each of its cities should adopt and develop a comprehensive groundwater management plan such as that set forth in AB 3030. The information from the existing groundwater studies should be used to provide a bank of information upon which to initiate a groundwater management plan.

Response to R2:

Under AB 3030, there are twelve technical components that should be included in a groundwater management plan. While the City has not prepared or adopted such a plan, various components have been implemented or under the jurisdiction of other agencies. It is the City's intent to address each component of the plan within City jurisdiction by implementing procedures and conducting or participating in studies pertaining to groundwater management. Each of the technical components is addressed below.

1. *Control of saline water intrusion*. Not applicable to the City's groundwater supply.
2. *Identification and management of wellhead protection areas and recharge areas*. The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) is the agency responsible for preparing a drinking water source assessment as part of the EPA Wellhead Protection Program. Once the assessment is completed, the

information will be shared with the public and at that time, the City can determine what protection measures, if any, are needed.

Although the assessment has not been completed by the CDHS, the City has implemented various measures to ensure the protection of its wellhead and recharge areas. These measures include the implementation of a Storm Water Management Program that addresses the prevention of pollutants into water bodies within the city; adoption of an ordinance that requires connection to the City's sewer system in lieu of an onsite septic system; a vulnerability assessment of the City's drinking water system; industrial waste monitoring program that includes onsite inspection of certain categories of users that may discharge hazardous or toxic wastes; City participation in the GAMA program (see "Response to R1, item no. 6"); and land use permit requirements to abandon well and/or septic systems in accordance with County requirements.

- 3. Regulation of the migration of contaminated groundwater. Migration of contaminated groundwater is regulated by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB) who is authorized under State Water Resources Control Board Resolution No. 92-49 as the principal state agency with primary responsibility for the coordination and control of water quality. The State and Regional Water Boards implement the policies of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act to ensure cleanup of any discharge and abate the effects thereof to background conditions of groundwater. Through regulations such as Code of California Code of Regulation (CCR), Title 23, Underground Storage Tank regulations, responsible parties of the contamination must locate the contamination, define the extent of the contamination, remediate the plume, and verify the cleanup process, all under the purview of the NCRWQCB. For protection of the City groundwater, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) is identifying wellhead protection areas surrounding municipal wells in addition to nearby properties that may impact the wells water quality sometime in the future. Well head protection areas are properties surrounding wells where the property use is limited to development that would not allow chemicals or migration of possible accidental contamination to the well water. See "Response to R2, item no. 2" for more details on the Wellhead Protection Program.*
- 4. Administration of a well abandonment and well destruction program. The City refers the administration of this program to the County of Sonoma.*
- 5. Mitigation of conditions of overdraft. The Santa Rosa Plain is not a basin that is identified to be in a condition of overdraft. Nevertheless, the City has implemented groundwater management practices in order to allow the recharge of the groundwater basin (see "Response to R1, item no. 3").*
- 6. Replenishment of groundwater extracted by water producers. See "Response to R1, item no. 3.*

7. Monitoring of groundwater levels and storage. The City has been monitoring its static water levels for its wells for the past since each of the City's three wells were constructed and continues to monitor each well. The information is provided to the CDHS as part of its annual reporting requirements.
8. Facilitating conjunctive use operations. See "Response to R1, item no. 3.
9. Identification of well construction policies. The City refers the administration and permitting of well construction to the County of Sonoma. The regulating agency for well usage is the CDHS.
10. Construction and operation by the local agency of groundwater contamination cleanup, recharge, storage, conservation, water recycling and extraction projects. The City relies on the various county, state and federal regulatory agencies to regulate groundwater contamination cleanup along with storage and recharge projects, and extraction projects. Conservation projects are implemented and administered by the City (see Response to R1, paragraph 4). The City is actively pursuing water recycling (see Response to R1, paragraph 7).
11. Development of relationships with state and federal regulatory agencies. The City has active and ongoing relationships with the various county, state and federal regulatory agencies. Many of these inter-agency relationships are identified in the City's Vulnerability Assessment, its Storm Water Management Program, its Memorandum of Understanding with the Sonoma County Water Agency, and its Industrial Waste Monitoring Program. The City is also conducting an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for its Drinking Water System which will identify all the county, state and federal agencies and contacts that will need to be contacted in order to quickly respond to emergencies that affect its drinking water system. The ERP is expected to be completed by the end of this year.
12. Review of land use plans and coordination with land use planning agencies to assess activities which create a reasonable risk of groundwater contamination. The City is embarking on a General Plan update in 2005 (see "Response to R1") and the update will address this issue. The City is in the final adoption stages of a major Land Use Code Update. All new projects within the City of Cotati are required to utilize City utilities. Uses that pose a possible risk to the environment, such as groundwater contamination, require closer scrutiny through the Use Permit process. In addition, the City monitors County activities when they occur within the City's Sphere of Influence.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations to the Grand Jury Report and to explain the City's water resources management practices, policies and

programs. Any questions pertaining to this letter should be addressed to our City Engineer, Toni Bertolero. Ms. Bertolero can be reached at 523-1010.

Sincerely,



Pat Gilardi
Mayor

cc: Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk of the Board
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Councilmembers: Berkemeier, Kurvors, Moore, Orchard
Terry Stubbings, City Manager
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