



Legislation Text

File #: 17-454, **Version:** 1

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SUBJECT: Ordinance Revision: Water Conservation

REPORT IN BRIEF

Consider revising Water Shortage Regulations, Merced Municipal Code Chapter 15.42, into a long-term Water Conservation Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion introducing **Ordinance No. 2479**, an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Merced, California, Amending Chapter 15.42, "Water Shortage Regulations," of the Merced Municipal Code.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt as recommended by staff; or,
2. Modify the action; or,
3. Continue action until a future City Council meeting, specifying date; or
4. Deny the action.

AUTHORITY

Charter of the City of Merced, Article II, Section 200, and Article IV, Section 405 of the Merced Municipal Code (MMC), and Article XIII of the California State Constitution in accordance with the MMC, Title 15. California Water Code Section 10631 allows water suppliers to enact ordinances that prohibit certain uses of water for water conservation purposes.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

As provided for in the 2017-18 Adopted Budget.

DISCUSSION

Per Council direction, staff is presenting a revised water shortage regulations portion of the Water System Ordinance. The City Council held a study session to review groundwater and water conservation on August 21, 2017. A presentation was made by Hicham ElTal, of the Merced Irrigation District, and by Leah Brown, Water Conservation Specialist of the City of Merced. The history of groundwater in Merced and the condition of our subbasin were reviewed. According to the California State Department of Water Resources, we are currently in a critically over-drafted groundwater basin. The history of drought and its cyclical nature in California were presented. The most recent patterns show drought is occurring more frequently and for longer durations.

The City has a history of adjusting this portion of the water system ordinance to reflect the current needs. In 1993, the Council declared a Water Shortage Emergency and the ordinance for watering restrictions was created. In 2014, the ordinance was changed to reflect the need for reducing to just two days per week of watering in response to the Governor's emergency drought declaration. The City then installed water meters and continued its restrictions. The drought emergency is now over; however, the focus on water conservation is incorporating conservation practices into our lifestyle and making plans for future long-term conservation.

The council discussed the presentation and asked questions for clarification. They directed staff to bring back a revised water conservation ordinance with the following directions:

1. Increase the number of irrigation days from two to three days per week.
2. Keep the hours of watering the same, allowing for watering before 9:00 a.m. and after 9:00 p.m.
3. Create a staged approach to conservation, as recommended by the Department of Water Resources.
4. Administratively clean up language in the ordinance to reflect current practices.

It is staff's recommendation that Council consider introducing this ordinance to reflect the changes discussed. Revisions to the Water System Ordinance, Merced Municipal Code 15.42, will allow for future long-term conservation, water conservation levels needed in times of drought, emergency, or in years with more water abundance.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

No appropriation of funds is needed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Amended Ordinance, Chapter 15.42 Water Conservation Plan
2. Current Ordinance, Chapter 15.42 - REDLINED