

# **MCL WATER SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION POSITION PAPER**

(Approved by the Board of Directors on July 15, 2014)

## **Background**

Marin County relies heavily on local rainfall that is stored in reservoirs and replenishes wells and springs for much of its water supply, with additional water purchased from Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA). SCWA water originates from the Russian and Eel River watersheds.

Several service districts distribute the county's water supply: Marin Municipal Water District, North Marin Water District, Stinson Beach County Water District, Bolinas Community Public Utility District, Inverness Public Utility District, Muir Beach Community Services District. The County does not use water from state or federal projects that provide a bulk of supply to Southern California and to the Central Valley. Marin Municipal and North Marin Water Districts are the county's largest suppliers and store rainfall and imported SCWA water in eight reservoirs of varying size.

Along with supplying household and business needs, Marin's water supply is also used for fire suppression, and state resource agencies require releases from two reservoirs into creeks that support salmonids and other aquatic species. Ranches use water from springs, wells, reservoirs; a few even have access to town or city water systems, but for the most part they are heavily dependent on rainfall for pasture to maintain livestock and to grow crops.

Marin's Mediterranean climate divides the year into a rainy winter and a dry summer that can extend for several months. The relatively stable rainfall pattern that characterized the past century is changing, however, and there is increasing annual variability in rainfall amounts throughout the state with the growing potential for long-term drought. As natural aridity in southern parts of California increases, and rainfall varies substantially from county to county, there is growing interest in sharing of water resources through expansion of connecting pipeline systems and inter-agency agreements.

## **MCL Policies.**

1. Conservation and efficiency measures are the preferred strategies to augment Marin County's water needs. New supply sources should be considered only after all reasonable conservation and reuse opportunities have been found incapable of meeting emergencies or future demand.
2. Implement a broad range of water conservation programs and strategies including, but not limited to, rebates for water use efficiency measures, and water rate pricing that incentivizes water use reduction, particularly on landscapes for homes and businesses. Provide incentives to encourage the use of recycled or reused water for irrigation.

3. Improve reservoir and distribution system operational efficiency (e.g. leak detection).
4. Consider all reasonable options for water reclamation and reuse, including emerging strategies that appear impractical, costly, or technically difficult at this time, but which could become viable as technology improves. A broad range of possibilities should continue to be evaluated to meet water needs, particularly if future rainfall does not follow past models.
5. Water agencies, media and community organizations should provide extensive public education and outreach focused on changing the public's choice of products and practices affecting water use (e.g., native and other low-water-using landscaping, irrigation and appliances). Promote use of water district websites, which are excellent sources of conservation information.
6. Encourage partnerships between Marin County sanitation districts and water distribution agencies, including MMWD and NMWD but other agencies as well, to produce reclaimed water, reducing potable water demand.
7. Water agencies, along with other local districts and jurisdictions, should be encouraged to work cooperatively, particularly in years of unusual drought, to meet the needs of all Marin County residents.
8. Local governments, special districts, and businesses should collaborate to achieve conservation goals, including: expansion of opportunities for recycling and reuse of reclaimed wastewater, code reforms as appropriate to enable gray water reclamation and stimulate reuse technologies, consistent with maintaining public health standards.
9. Encourage use of rainfall and stormwater runoff, such as catchment basins for homes and businesses which are appropriate for property size and topography and are feasible in an urban environment. These are systems in which gutters and downspouts are connected to barrels or cisterns that capture and store rainwater for future non-potable use. With rains so seasonal in Marin County, catchment systems may be useful in limited situations.
10. Ensure that water supply and distribution services protect and, where feasible, improve Marin County waterways, watershed habitat and native species.
11. Promote low-impact land development, a method of land planning and engineering design to manage stormwater runoff so that on-site pollutant treatment (e.g. bioswales) is maximized, and natural drainages, vegetation, and buffer zones are preserved.
12. Evaluate the impacts on streams of the use of well water for landscape irrigation in areas served by municipal water districts.