



Public Works Department

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Response to 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County

Report Date: September 12, 2023

Response By: City of Thousand Oaks

In response to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report titled, “Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County” dated June 12, 2023, and in compliance with California Penal Code section 933.05, the City of Thousand Oaks provides the following responses.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

The City disagrees partially with the finding numbered: F-01.

F-01. The Grand Jury finds that an adequate supply of water is essential for successful suppression of wildfires. (SF-01, SF-02, SF-03, SF-04)

City Response: The City agrees that an adequate supply of water is one important component in a multi-pronged approach to wildfire fighting. A potable water system is one of those many components when a fire is within the wildland-urban interface. However, potable water systems are designed for domestic use, not to fight wildfires. They are designed with specific criteria set by local fire codes to meet daily domestic demands and to have enough capacity and flow to provide firefighting ability in isolated events for a limited number of hours based on the types of structures within each zone. In agreeing that an adequate supply of water is essential for successful suppression of wildfires, it would be false to assume or draw a conclusion that a domestic water system alone can provide an adequate supply to suppress a wildfire. Wildfires have the potential to spread rapidly and consume vast areas and multiple structures simultaneously, requiring significant amounts of water for firefighting efforts. Potable water systems are not designed to meet these extreme demands. However, the City does endeavor to maximize the amount of water available for firefighting efforts through its potable water system during wildfire emergencies.

The City agrees with findings numbered: F-02, F-03, F-04, F-05, F-06, F-07, F-08, F-09, F-10, F-12, F-13, and F-14.

The City does not have actual knowledge of these facts with respect to the other water purveyors in Ventura County; however, City agrees that it is possible that there are inconsistencies among purveyors. Not all findings are applicable to the City of Thousand Oaks, as described in the response to the recommendations below.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The City has carefully reviewed the Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report and has the following responses to the Recommendations. The Grand Jury Report statement of the Recommendation is presented first, followed by the City's response.

R-01. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish written operational procedures and training to provide for increased water supply for fire flow during FWWs, RFWs, active fires, and PSPS. (F-01, F-02, F-03, F-04, F-05, F-06, F-07)

City Response: The City has implemented this recommendation in part and has written operational procedures in place. The City developed a Red Flag Warning/Public Safety Power Shut-Off (PSPS) Procedure in June 2020 in response to the CPUC decision to implement the first phase of the PSPS proceedings in May 2020. The City has a practiced approach in place for utilizing its portable generators during power outages that identify generator priorities based on the criticality of each pump station. The City will update these written procedures to include Fire Weather Watch (FWW) and active fires within the year.

R-02. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors have emergency power on site for all critical water infrastructure including Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems. (F-08, F-09)

City Response: The City has implemented this recommendation in part. A permanent backup power supply has been installed at one of the City's 16 pump stations, and generators for two additional pump stations were included in the approved 2023-2025 capital improvement project (CIP) budget for permanent backup power, to be installed by Spring 2024. The City's Municipal Service Center (MSC) houses the central components of the SCADA system. The MSC has permanent backup power for this portion of the SCADA system. Additionally, the City has installed an on-site battery backup system at one pump station which provides backup power for a limited time in the event of an outage. Additional battery backup systems are being planned for six of the City's water pump stations contingent on grant funding. Four of the City's pump stations have diesel-driven backup pumps that supply water pressure to their associated zones in the event of a power outage. The City owns three portable backup generators and rents a fourth backup generator between October and January each year as part



of the City's Red Flag Warning/PSPS Procedure. The City plans to purchase a fourth portable generator in lieu of a rental unit. Portable units can be staged onsite prior to or during emergency events. All City pump stations are equipped with emergency power quick connects for portable generator power connections. The City plans to add additional permanent on-site power generation to pump stations, reservoirs, and additional SCADA infrastructure in future budget years.

- R-03. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish common communication protocols with adjoining water purveyors to coordinate needed actions, including water transfers during active fires. (F-10)**

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City has five emergency water interconnects: three with California American Water Service (Cal Am) and two with California Water Service (Cal Water). The City has agreements in place with both Cal Am and Cal Water which establish common communication protocols for emergency use and joint maintenance of the emergency interconnects.

- R-05. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll their employees in the FCC Wireless Priority Service (WPS) providing cell phone priority in emergencies. (F-12)**

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City enrolled key staff in WPS beginning in 2015 and provides updates to the list annually.

- R-06. The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll in the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) providing landline phone priority in emergencies. (F-12)**

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City enrolled key staff in GETS beginning in 2015 and provides updates to the list annually.

- R-07. The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors enroll in Cal-WARN, a network of water and wastewater agencies that can provide emergency resources. (F-13)**

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City is an active participating member of the Cal-WARN system. The City of Thousand Oaks also coordinates with the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES) to provide additional resources for water agencies, allowing public agencies to assist each other under the provisions of the



Master Mutual Aid Agreement. The Cal-WARN system provides a forum for developing and maintaining emergency contacts and relationships with other Cal-WARN member agencies.

R-08. The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors provide brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure. (F-14)

City Response: The recommendation has been implemented and continues an ongoing basis. The City's Landscape Division provides brush clearance for all City-owned water tanks, pump stations, and related water facilities/infrastructure according to the Ventura County Fire Department's (VCFD) Fire Hazard Reduction and Vegetation Management Ordinance. City Staff works closely with VCFD representatives to perform annual brush clearance through the oversight of two City contractors. The City and VCFD staff continue to exceed the 30-foot clearance requirement, using a 100-foot requirement which was implemented in 2018 following the Thomas Fire in Ventura County (2017). Contractors and City staff provide 100-foot clearance from all structures, including pump stations and water tank sites. Additionally, the City has a Multi-Agency Weed Abatement/Fuel Modification agreement for contracted annual weed abatement services for adjacent Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) and Conejo Recreation and Park District (CRPD) owned properties near City water tank sites and pump stations. This joint agency program provides defensible space for firefighting to prevent fire hazards posed by vegetative growth and accumulation of combustible materials.

SUMMARY

The City of Thousand Oaks wishes to thank the Grand Jury for its comprehensive evaluation of existing protocols and procedures pertaining to the availability of water for wildfires in Ventura County. The City Council appreciates and welcomes the efforts of the Grand Jury in their review of City protocols and procedures in relation to this issue.

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Kevin McNamee, Mayor
City of Thousand Oaks

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Response to 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Form (Please See California Penal Code Section 933.05)

Report Title: Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County

Responding Entity: Mayor Kevin McNamee, City of Thousand Oaks City Council

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the Findings numbered: F-02, F-03, F-04, F-05, F-06, F-07, F-08, F-09, F-10, F-12, F-13, and F-14.
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered: F-01
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the Findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-03, R-05, R-06, R-07, and R-08 have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a summary indicating the timeframe for implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation to include: scope and parameters of the analysis or study and timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion with the agency or department head. The timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the report.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 9/12/2023

Signed: _____

Title: Mayor, City of Thousand Oaks

Number of pages attached: 4