



# City of Palo Alto

## City Council Staff Report

(ID # 4915)

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**Report Type: Consent Calendar**

**Meeting Date: 8/4/2014**

**Summary Title: Groundwater Management Resolution**

**Title: Adoption of a Resolution in Support of Sustainable Groundwater Management in the San Francisquito Creek Area**

**From: City Manager**

**Lead Department: Utilities**

### **Recommended Motion**

Staff recommends that Council consider the following motion: To adopt a resolution in support of sustainable groundwater management in the San Francisquito Creek area.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution in support of sustainable groundwater management in the San Francisquito Creek area.

### **Executive Summary**

Groundwater is an important water supply resource in California, particularly in periods of drought. A lack of coordinated groundwater resource management has led to dire situations in some parts of the state including irreversible land subsidence and salt water intrusion. In order to decrease the probability of such an undesirable outcome locally, a number of agencies in the region have agreed to adopt a resolution regarding sustainable groundwater management, with the goal that this action will raise awareness of issues related to this important water resource.

### **Discussion**

Recognizing that groundwater plays a critical water supply role during droughts, representatives from the Cities of Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, and Menlo Park, Stanford University, San Mateo County, the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) and several other agencies and non-governmental organizations convened earlier this year to generate an inter-jurisdictional dialogue about long-term sustainable management of our shared groundwater basin. Consensus was reached that, as demand for groundwater increases, all affected jurisdictions would benefit from a coordinated approach to groundwater management. To that end, staff representatives of the agencies involved in this process have agreed to recommend that their governing boards adopt a resolution regarding sustainable groundwater management

with the goal that this action will raise public awareness of the factors potentially impacting the quality and availability of this important resource.

The City has a vested interest in maintaining the quality and availability of groundwater. As part of the City's emergency water supply and storage project, the City recently refurbished its five existing wells and completed three new wells. These wells, along with a newly constructed water storage facility, stand ready to provide water supply to Palo Alto retail water customers in times of water supply emergencies or drought. It is, therefore, critical that the groundwater is safe, of high quality, and available.

Adoption of this resolution will reinforce Palo Alto's commitment to sustainable management of groundwater as a source of supply. In fact, the City already regularly communicates with the SCVWD and the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority regarding groundwater issues. Palo Alto also works with neighboring agencies to prevent groundwater contamination. In addition, a representative from Palo Alto serves on the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority board.

### **Resource Impact**

There is no resource impact related to the adoption of this resolution.

### **Policy Implications**

This recommendation is consistent with the Council-approved Comprehensive Plan, specifically:

1. Policy N-51: Minimize exposure to geologic hazards, including slope stability, subsidence, and expansive soils, and to seismic hazards including ground shaking, fault rupture, liquefaction, and land sliding.
2. Policy N-18: Protect Palo Alto's groundwater from the adverse impacts of urban uses.
  - a. Program N-22: Work with Santa Clara Valley Water District to identify and map key groundwater recharge area for use in land use planning and permitting and the protection of groundwater resources.
3. Policy N-19: Secure a reliable, long-term supply of water for Palo Alto.

### **Environmental Review**

Council's adoption of the proposed resolution does not meet the definition of a project, under Public Resources Code Section 21065, therefore California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review is not required.

### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Resolution in Support of Sustainable Groundwater Management (PDF)

# ATTACHMENT A

NOT YET APPROVED

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution of the Council of the City of Palo Alto In Support of Sustainable  
Groundwater Management in the San Francisquito Creek Area

## R E C I T A L S

A. The San Francisquito Creek area of the Midpeninsula overlies the Santa Clara and San Mateo Plain Groundwater Subbasins.

B. Groundwater is a critical natural resource that is vital for emergency water supplies on the Midpeninsula, and therefore needs to be protected.

C. Most of the water consumed on the Midpeninsula is purchased from a single source – the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) – with 85% coming from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir on the Tuolumne River, making our primary water supply vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as well as major catastrophes.

D. Interest in local groundwater extraction is growing as a result of rising SFPUC water prices, limits on current availability of SFPUC water, population growth and likely reductions in water supply due to climate change and droughts.

E. Unsustainable groundwater extraction will result in declining groundwater levels, which may lead to saltwater intrusion, land subsidence and degradation of water quality.

F. Contingency plans of many water providers for droughts and emergencies likely will rely on the same shared groundwater resources, making strong support and cooperation from well owners, water agencies, land use planning agencies and all water users vital to protecting and maintaining our groundwater resources.

G. Groundwater resources can be enhanced through conjunctive water management, including aggressive water conservation and efficiency, use of alternative supplies such as recycled water, and storm water infiltration, and all forms of groundwater recharge.

H. Groundwater and surface water in the San Francisquito Creek area are interconnected resources that cross political boundaries and support multiple beneficial uses.

I. More information on the hydrology and geology of the San Francisquito Creek area is needed to better design and implement sustainable groundwater management practices.

J. The City of Palo Alto currently collaborates with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority regarding groundwater issues and works with neighboring agencies to prevent groundwater contamination.

NOT YET APPROVED

K. The City of Palo Alto's Comprehensive Plan contains policies to minimize exposure to geologic hazards, including slope stability, subsidence, and expansive soils, and to seismic hazards including ground shaking, liquefaction and land sliding, to protect Palo Alto's groundwater from adverse impacts of urban uses, and to secure a reliable, long-term supply of water for Palo Alto.

L. The City of Palo Alto provides environmentally safe and convenient hazardous waste disposal for residents and small businesses.

M. The City of Palo Alto implements conservation efforts in accordance with the Urban Water Management Plan.

N. The City of Palo Alto maintains a newly-constructed water storage facility in Palo Alto, including five recently refurbished wells and three new wells as a source of emergency water supply.

O. The City of Palo Alto has the right to use local groundwater in accordance with its permit from the California Department of Public Health.

P. Individual property owners have the right to install wells and pump groundwater within the service territory of the City of Palo Alto.

The Council of the City of Palo Alto RESOLVES as follows:

SECTION 1. The City of Palo Alto remains committed to collaborating, as appropriate, with other agencies and organizations to better understand the hydrology and geology of the San Francisquito Creek area; and

SECTION 2. The City of Palo Alto remains committed to the sustainable management of local groundwater, including conjunctive water management and responsible conservation, to protect its quality and ensure its availability during droughts and emergency situations

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NOT YET APPROVED

SECTION 3. The Council's adoption of this resolution does not meet the definition of a project under Public Resources Code 21065, therefore California Environmental Quality Act review is not required.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

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Senior Deputy City Attorney

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City Manager

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Director of Utilities

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Director of Administrative Services