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TESTIMONY OF SANTA ROSA CITY COUNCILMEMBER
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BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
ON H.R. 716: THE SANTA ROSA URBAN REUSE PLAN ACT

Chairwoman Napolitano and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss H.R. 716 – the Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan Act. The Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan is a model for reuse of treated wastewater for landscape irrigation. The project is especially important in a region that remains semi arid for six months of the year and where droughts pose a genuine threat to both human and protected/threatened salmonid populations. Using recycled water for landscape irrigation conserves valuable fresh water for not only human consumption but also for watershed preservation and enhancement.

Background

The Santa Rosa Regional Wastewater System serves the Northern California cities of Santa Rosa, Cotati, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol and parts of unincorporated Sonoma County, serving a population that exceeds 225,000. This system recycles over 80 percent of its tertiary-treated water to: 1) irrigate over 6,400 acres of farmlands, vineyards and public and private landscaping; and 2) inject into the Geysers geothermal fields to recharge natural geysers in order to produce green electricity. The remainder of the water is seasonally discharged into the Russian River.

Santa Rosa's reuse system has been developed over the last 40 years and includes cutting edge projects, such as the public-private partnership to use recycled water to produce green power at the Geysers. The City is an experienced urban water recycler with programs already in place at two city parks, a golf course and Sonoma State University. As committed water recyclers, the City has invested over \$350 million in water treatment and re-use projects over the years.

Major goals of the Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan

- Minimize the impacts to the Russian River (a vital migratory corridor for three federally protected salmon species by meeting subregional growth requirements with decreased water diversions and a reduction in required seasonal recycled water discharge.
- Reduce irrigation of farmland listed as high quality habitat for four endangered species, including the California Tiger Salamander.
- Use all recycled water produced by a growing population to irrigate parks, schools, roadway median strips, cemeteries, new commercial and residential developments, and golf courses.

- Assist the City in meeting hot weather landscape irrigation demands without increasing diversion of potable water from the Russian River.
- Provide flexibility to accommodate the use of recycled water made available by neighboring agencies.

Environmental Benefits

The main conveyance of regional water supplies is the Russian River, a 115-mile coastal stream that is a migration corridor for threatened salmon and steelhead. The Urban Reuse Project – and similar projects that will follow in its footsteps – will result in fewer withdrawals from the River and its tributaries and safeguard vital habitat for threatened steelhead and coho salmon.

The Project will also help restore habitat for the endangered California Tiger Salamander and three endangered plant species by allowing formerly irrigated farmland to return to vernal pools, and in some cases, providing recycled water for seasonal wetlands.

Finally, the project will allow winter water production to be used for summer urban irrigation uses and reduce recycled water discharges to the Russian River.

Water Conservation Benefits

Most of the City of Santa Rosa's potable water is provided under contract by the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), which withdraws water from the Russian River. For three of the past six years, at the request of the SCWA, the State Water Resources Control Board has issued a Temporary Urgency Flow Modification Order for the Russian River, reducing flows from an upriver dam and impacting local water availability. The combination of regulatory requirements needed to protect threatened species and warming climate trends increase the likelihood that these "temporary" flow reductions may continue to occur frequently or become permanent.

Even in "normal" weather years, the City of Santa Rosa, experiences water supply problems on especially hot days, due to high urban irrigation demands and a constrained delivery system operated by the SCWA.

By replacing potable water used for urban landscape irrigation with recycled water, the Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Project will significantly reduce or eliminate the impacts of potential fresh water shortages.

Project Elements and Costs

The project will provide recycled water to 1,000 of the largest water users in the City, including parks, schools, fairgrounds, industrial and commercial facilities. The project will provide 1,000 million gallons of recycled water (3,000 acre-feet) per year for urban irrigation, avoiding both fresh water withdrawals and treated wastewater discharges of this volume into the Russian River.

The Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan/Project consists of the following elements and costs:

Restore 72-acres of wetlands habitat for four endangered species.	\$3.0 million
Retrofit irrigation systems at 750 private irrigation sites to handle recycled water in compliance with state and federal regulations.	\$ 3.8 million
Construct two storage ponds totaling 625 million gallons.	\$58.2 million
Construct 61 miles of pipeline to deliver recycled water.	<u>\$79.1 million</u>
 Total Project Cost:	 \$144.1 million

H.R. 716 would provide an authorization for up to \$20 million of the project cost but not more than 25 percent of total project cost, with the remainder expected to be local funding.

Project Status

An Environmental Impact Report has been completed and certified, and preliminary design work has been completed. With the appropriation of federal funds, final design and construction can begin. With federal appropriations, the first phase of the project could be completed, and water delivered to customers by 2010. As demand grows over the next 5 to 7 years, the second and final phase of the project would be completed. The City has a financing plan to cover the local (75-percent) share of the Project cost. The first phase of the financing plan will be implemented in summer 2007; bonds will be sold to finance final design phase.

Conclusion

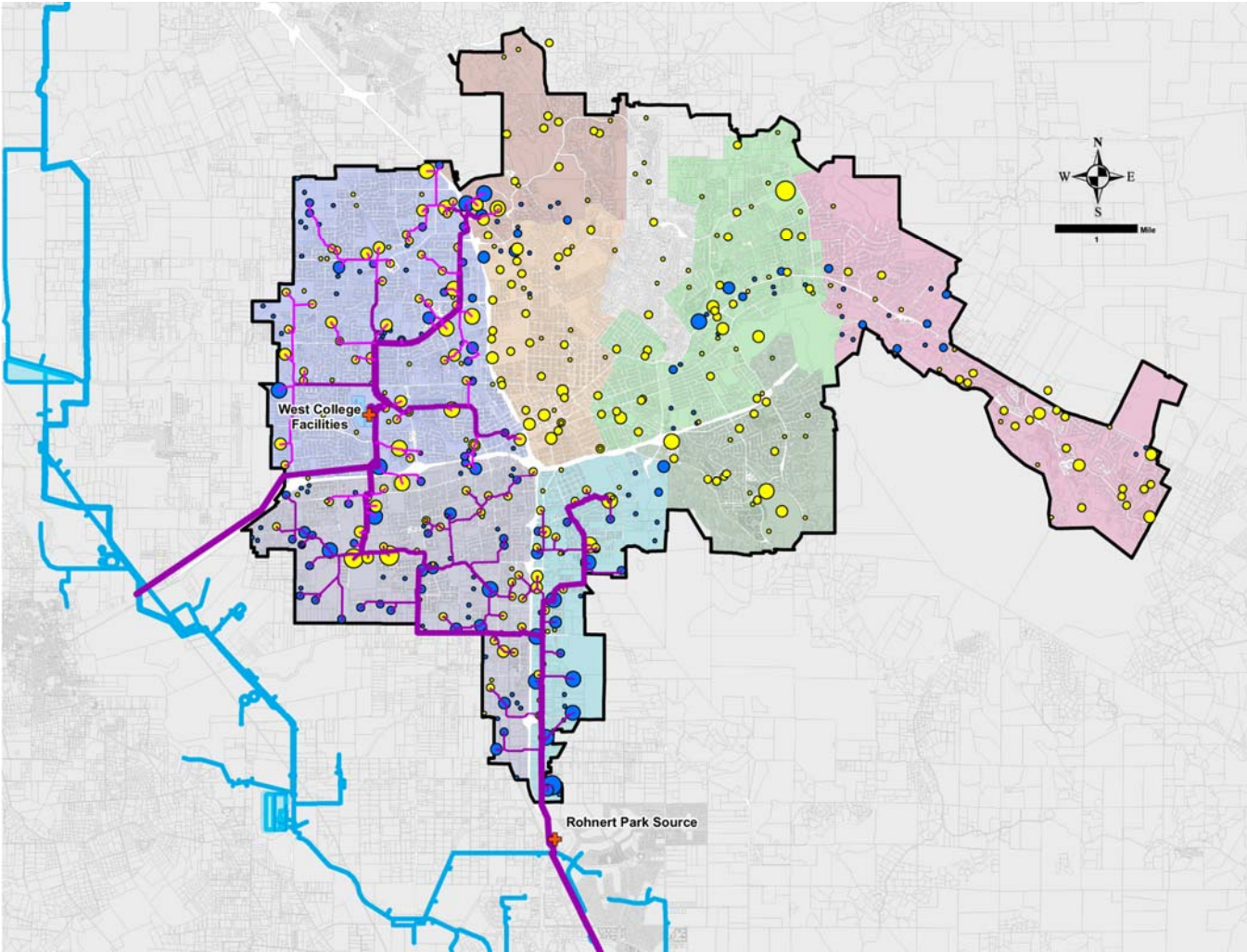
In conclusion I would like to reiterate the importance of this regional project which benefits water supply but also federally protected salmon populations and the protected California Tiger Salamander, while enhancing the Russian River Watershed. The City of Santa Rosa's Subregional Wastewater System looks forward to continuing to raise the bar with respect to conservation and recycling and the approval of H.R. 716 should help ensure the viability of the Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan as a model recycling program.

Chairwoman Napolitano and members of the Subcommittee, the City of Santa Rosa and I appreciate your interest in the long term sustainability of the water supply, environmental and species protection in this important watershed.

Thank you

Map of Urban Reuse Plan Area – see attached

City of Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan



City of Santa Rosa Urban Reuse Plan
Dots represent recycled water demand. Yellow dots represent current demand. Blue dots represent future demand. Dot diameter is in proportion to annual water use.

- Proposed Urban Reuse Project pipelines
- Existing recycled water pipeline