

2021  Valley Water

Drought Summit

Together, our future is drought-proof.

Summary of Breakout Sessions

Saturday, October 23, 2021

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Pt. 1: Formulating Regional Approaches to Drought Response

- What does a regional drought response approach look like?
- How would we establish a regional approach to drought and conservation in Santa Clara County?
- What are the obstacles to creating a regional solution?
- What are the benefits of regionalism to my organization/city, and how do we get there?
- Other comments

Pt. 2: Implementing Regional Approaches to Drought Response

- What can you do in your cities/ jurisdictions in the next 60 days?
- What are the obstacles and how will you overcome them?
- What is your or your organization's commitment to addressing drought?
- Other comments

**Pt. 1: Formulating
Regional Approaches to
Drought Response**

What does a regional drought response approach look like?

- We need unified messaging that:
 - Promotes collaboration to achieve conservation goals
 - Provides residents an understanding of where water comes from
 - Provides cities information on regional goals
- Cities should be provided with information to develop a better understanding of their individual water use portfolios and compares their use with Valley Water, retailers, and other cities
- Restrictions on non-essential water usage should be considered as a response strategy
- We should make improvements that allow for better/more water re-use and the capture of water (includes a preference of purification rather than storage)

How would we establish a regional approach to drought and conservation in Santa Clara County?

- We need coordinated actions between cities, county, and retailers to:
 - Identify and implement ordinances and incentives in a consistent manner
 - Document the mechanisms that are currently in place
 - Inform elected officials about the drought, the role of their constituents in addressing the problem, and how growth can be balanced with conservation efforts
- We need to leverage opportunities to learn from others: What's working well and how are they doing it?
- It is crucial to establish conservation as the new normal way of life

What are the obstacles to creating a regional solution?

- Valley Water needs to be a regional champion and work to coordinate the same message throughout the county, develop a framework that's sensitive to individual cities, and gain buy-in at all socioeconomic levels
- Jurisdictional barriers need to be considered and addressed, including city limits, retailer service area, and regional projects
- As climate change is a lasting threat, we need bigger solutions beyond what can be done locally. We need state and federal help, especially on funding
- There will not be one single perfect solution, and we must remember the equity lens for outreach, implementation, and education
- Additional obstacles include the need for technical information, confusion of the players involved, obstacles specific to retailers and wholesalers, rates relative to saving water, and the influence of wealthy agricultural growers

What are the benefits of regionalism to my organization/city, and how do we get there?

- The Valley is going to need to come together and we won't be able to do it piecemeal. Regionalism is a good message, even if local areas have individual options. It's important to have options for how we address this issue
- We need to be prepared to scale these projects and ensure the funding base needed
- We should look into diversifying water sources
- We need to ensure consistency and predictability of the water supply across the region, which establishes a baseline of what to expect

Other comments:

What can Valley Water do to assist your community to better navigate the drought?

- Provide consistent messaging, keep wildlife and their habitats healthy, help keep fish and trees alive.

How do we invest more in this area of making new development more efficient?

- Prioritize reviewing MWENDO and find a timeline to implement it to build savings as soon as possible

Pt. 2: Implementing Regional Approaches to Drought Response

What can you do in your cities/ jurisdictions in the next 60 days?

- We can develop scorecards for cities/retailers or an awards system (i.e. rate with a “golden water drop”) – could use news/social media to encourage engagement and friendly competition
- Information needs to be shared regarding jurisdictions’ water ordinances to understand what is already in place across the region
- Recommended to consider new ordinances or surcharges:
 - Water use surcharge and water budget
 - Outdoor water use monitoring
 - Scale up ordinances as conditions worsen
 - Offset storage
- We can collaborate on outreach to:
 - Councilmembers to discuss policy and education
 - State representatives to get buy-in, pass urban water management plan and water shortage contingency plan
- We need to reinforce the drought and conservation messaging

What are the obstacles and how will you overcome them?

- Staffing is a persistent issue
- Enforcement power needs to be defined
- Environmental permitting needs to be ensured
- Mixed messaging is confusing to the public because cities have different measures they implement, which are not consistent over the county
- We need decisionmakers to really push the issue to drive conservation
- Access to data is an issue:
 - Finding a way to identify the worst offenders
 - Standardize metrics (we don't know if residential use is based on one person per household or eight)
 - Need resources to provide specific feedback to their constituents

What is your or your organization's commitment to addressing drought?

“Work with our partners. Lock arms on the path ahead, together.

Everyone is a water messenger and water manager, from retailers to cities to schools and more. Focus on conservation as a lifestyle.”

- Conduct urban water management planning
- Improve messaging, communication, social media, and technical support to help public
- Promote plants and drought tolerant landscapes to help address biodiversity crisis
- Bring MWENDO provisions to council for additional consideration
- Put inserts into bills with common sense tips to conserve water
- Include this issue in climate action planning
- Evaluate design of parks
- Get real time data on water usage to customers (i.e., Flume)
- Advocate for the long term
- Protect riparian forest, even if it costs more water
- Create champions
- Work with both SJWC and Valley Water to create awareness and identify solutions for residents
- Work with Teen Commission and Sustainability Commission to display facts and raise awareness of incentive programs
- Work on "lost water" in the system - it is a large percentage, and an untapped resource
- Support Valley Water on their master plan