

Headline: Aguirre calls for moratorium on developments pending water crisis
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SAN DIEGO – City Attorney Michael Aguirre called Monday for a temporary moratorium on all large developments in San Diego until the city implements programs that would ensure a reliable source of water.

“We have taken our water system to the breaking point,” Aguirre said.

He also called for mandatory water conservation in the city.

“The city of San Diego faces a water crisis,” Aguirre said. “The people of San Diego need to understand that we have built a water system that is 90 percent dependent on surplus water.”

Ninety percent of the water used in San Diego is imported, primarily from Northern California and the Colorado River.

There are five to seven proposed projects in the pipeline in San Diego that would be impacted by a moratorium on large residential and commercial developments, according to the City Attorney's Office.

Aguirre called for a halt to residential projects with 500 or more units, shopping centers larger than 500,000 square feet and office buildings with more than 250,000 square feet.

The city attorney again urged the public and elected officials to embrace a plan to use reclaimed water to augment San Diego's reservoirs, a proposal opponents have dubbed “toilet-to-tap.”

Mayor Jerry Sanders has repeatedly said he is opposed to using treated sewage to supplement drinking water supplies.

Sanders has said it would take the city a decade to build the necessary infrastructure to implement the city attorney's proposal and cost San Diego upwards of \$4.5 billion to complete.

“The city attorney's proposal for recycling sewage into drinking water would slam the city ratepayers with double-digit rate increases for years,” according to a statement from the mayor's office.

Sanders said Aguirre's plan would require San Diego to acquire land through eminent domain to build infrastructure, and in the end would only bolster the city's water supplies by about 5 percent.

“Indirect potable reuse is not a silver bullet to fix all of the region's water needs,” the mayor's office stated.

The mayor's office did not comment on Aguirre's call for a development moratorium or mandatory recycling.

Aguirre called Sanders' cost estimate “made up,” and chastised him for “not doing his homework” when it came to the issue of reclaimed water.

The city attorney acknowledged that a reclamation program would contribute only a “marginal” amount to the city's reservoirs, but that immediate action was needed to ensure ample water supplies.

Aguirre said San Diego faces severe water cutbacks in the wake of a federal judge's recent ruling that may limit the amount of fresh water that can be pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta in order to protect the delta smelt, an endangered fish.

Recycled water is now being used in San Diego for things like irrigation of landscaping along roadways and in parks, but it is not pumped into the municipal drinking supply.

The City Attorney's Office has scheduled a Sept. 27 "community forum" on the issue, at 6 p.m. at City Hall. #

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20070917-1422-aguirre-water.html>