



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 24, 2016

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Annual Wastewater Collection System Report

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive a report from staff on the wastewater collection system maintenance and management activities.

DISCUSSION:

The City operates 257 miles of wastewater collection system pipelines, the majority of which are six or eight inches in diameter and convey wastewater to the City's El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant. The operation of the wastewater collection system is regulated by the State Water Resources Control Board under a Waste Discharge Requirement Permit.

In April 2011, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (Channelkeeper) filed a lawsuit against the City in Federal District Court, alleging violations of the Clean Water Act caused by spills from the wastewater collection system pipelines. The City and Channelkeeper agreed to the terms of a Consent Decree in March 2012. By the time the Consent Decree was negotiated, the City had already committed over \$400,000 and substantial staff resources to the development and implementation of management practices to improve collection system operations, with the ultimate external outcome of spill reduction. This work was incorporated into the Consent Decree and is the basis for most of the requirements of the Consent Decree. In addition to developing and implementing the management practices, the City agreed to repair, rehabilitate and/or replace an additional two miles of collection system pipes each year beyond the one percent per year that has historically comprised the Capital Improvement Plan for the collection system.

The City has committed to report by March 31st of each year, during the term of the Consent Decree, on the previous year's activities and to project the current year's work, particularly as it relates to the rehabilitation, replacement, and/or repair of wastewater collection system pipes, and subsequently to provide an oral report to Council. Channelkeeper is also invited to make a 20-minute presentation to Council. This report

is available for review by the City Council in Council Reading File and by the public in the City Clerk's Office, and will be summarized in the staff presentation.

In 2015, the City was successful in meeting or exceeding the maintenance practices and Capital Improvement work objectives required by the Consent Decree. However, the City did not achieve the Consent Decree Sewer System Overflow (SSO) Reduction Performance Standard (SSO Standard) for collection system spills. The SSO Standard for 2015 was 10 spills. The City had 16 spills, plus a release of wastewater from a vactor truck. None of the spills, however, caused a beach closure, and the volume spilled to public waterways was approximately 5,880 gallons.

Exceeding the SSO Standard does not put the City in violation of the Consent Decree, but it does require that the City identify and implement additional measures designed to reduce spills to within the SSO Standard. These additional measures must be developed in an SSO Reduction Action Plan (Plan), submitted by March 31st of the year following the year that the SSO Standard was exceeded. Additional measures to reduce SSOs in 2016 and beyond include both new programs and the continuation of successful programs that had begun in prior years. New programs include a proposal to negotiate a contract with Brown & Caldwell to assist and provide staff training on SSO reporting and analysis of sewer cleaning data. This also includes training to evaluate the sewer pipe cleaning frequency after an SSO event. The Acoustic Sounding Program, which began in 2014, will continue in 2016 as staff finds this program a successful means to quickly identify potentially blocked pipes. These additional measures may take time to fully implement and achieve the desired results. A copy of the Plan is available in the Council Reading File, and in the City Clerk's Office.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Funding for the implementation of the Consent Decree, along with all wastewater system costs, is provided through the Wastewater rates. In Fiscal Year 2013, the rates were increased by 10 percent to provide sufficient revenue to fund increased costs of compliance with the Consent Decree and to meet other Wastewater Fund needs. In Fiscal Year 2014, the rates were increased by 4 percent and in Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016, the rates were increased by 5.5 percent, respectively, to continue sufficient revenue funding requirements.

The Consent Decree caps the amount the City must expend to comply with its terms. The cap is increased by one percent each year. Because the City failed to meet the SSO Standard this year, the cap will be increased by an additional one percent of the wastewater collection system operating budget, or approximately \$100,000. To ensure adequate funding for collection system and treatment plant operations, staff is recommending a 5.5 percent wastewater increase for Fiscal Year 2017.

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SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office