

# County of Ventura

## **Drought and Water Shortage Task Force Charter**

2025

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|                 |                                                         |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| County          | County of Ventura                                       |
| CWC             | California Water Code                                   |
| GSA             | groundwater sustainability agency                       |
| PCT             | County of Ventura Project Coordination Team             |
| Resilience Plan | County of Ventura Drought Resilience Plan               |
| SB              | Senate Bill                                             |
| Task Force      | County of Ventura Drought and Water Shortage Task Force |
| VCCEO           | County of Ventura County Executive Office               |
| VCPWA           | County of Ventura Public Works Agency                   |
| VCRMA           | County of Ventura Resource Management Agency            |

## 1.0 Background and Legislative Directive

In September 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 552 (Hertzberg), enacting California Water Code (CWC) Sections 10609.50 through 10609.80, which assigned new responsibilities and requirements at the state and local levels to help small water suppliers and rural communities reduce their risks of inadequate water supply amid a water shortage event. A water shortage event could be caused by droughts or other emergencies, such as wildfires, earthquakes, or floods. Through SB 552, the California State Legislature identified counties as the best-suited government entity to provide the needed leadership to improve water resilience for state small water systems<sup>1</sup> and domestic wells<sup>2</sup>.

Under SB 552, counties are required to develop a plan that identifies potential drought and water shortage risks and proposes interim and long-term solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction (CWC Section 10609.70(b)). In addition to this plan, counties are required to establish a task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells (CWC Section 10609.70(a)(1)).

California Water Code Section 10609.70(a)(1) provides:

*A county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction, and shall invite representatives from the state and other local governments, including groundwater sustainability agencies, and community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents, to participate in the task force.*

## 2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this charter is to define the roles and responsibilities for the development and implementation of the County of Ventura Drought Resilience Plan (Resilience Plan). Parties covered by this charter include the County of Ventura Project Coordination Team (PCT) and the County of Ventura Drought and Water Shortage Task Force (Task Force), including representatives from state and local governments, local public agencies, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents interested in the Resilience Plan. These parties seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Facilitate development of a Resilience Plan that supports drought and water shortage preparedness and responsiveness for domestic wells and state small water systems within the County of Ventura's (County) jurisdiction.

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<sup>1</sup> A state small water system provides piped water to the public for human consumption for at least five, but not more than 14, service connections; and it does not regularly serve drinking water to more than an average of 25 individuals daily for more than 60 days out of the year (California Health and Safety Code Section 116275(n)).

<sup>2</sup> A domestic well is a groundwater well used to supply water for the domestic needs of an individual residence or a water system that is not a public water system and that has no more than four service connections (California Health and Safety Code Section 116681(i) [with equivalent definition in California Water Code Section 1060951(k)]).

- Facilitate regular coordination and communication among staff of relevant county departments, local water agencies, local water suppliers, groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA), and others representing the concerns of domestic wells and state small water systems users.
- Support implementation of drought and water shortage actions as identified in the Resilience Plan.

### **3.0 Organization**

The County, in compliance with CWC 10609.70(a)(1), established the Task Force in 2025 and invited representatives from government agencies and community organizations that have roles in drought condition monitoring, emergency services, hazard assessment, planning, operations, information coordination, water purveyors/wholesalers or water resources management, as well as representatives from domestic wells and state small water systems. The County conducted communication and outreach efforts utilizing notifications, public engagement efforts, and establishing a Resilience Plan website for community partners to register for the Task Force and stay informed. The membership of the Task Force includes the entities listed on the Resilience Plan website.

The Task Force also includes a PCT subgroup comprised of County staff. The PCT oversees the Task Force and leads Resilience Plan development and implementation. The Task Force is chaired by members of the PCT, with the County of Ventura Public Works Agency (VCPWA) and the County of Ventura County Executive Office (VCCEO) operating as the Task Force leads. The PCT membership includes the entities listed below:

- Representative from VCPWA Engineering Services
- Representative from VCPWA Watershed Protection
- Representative from the County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services
- Representative(s) from County of Ventura Resource Management Agency (VCRMA) Environmental Health
- Representative(s) from VCRMA Planning
- Representative(s) from VCCEO

### **4.0 Responsibilities**

The Task Force is an advisory body and does not have decision-making authority. It is intended to review and advise the PCT on the development of the Resilience Plan and assist in guiding its implementation.

Task Force members are expected to:

- Review progress on the development of the Resilience Plan, review and make recommendations on the Draft Resilience Plan, and assist in the Resilience Plan's implementation

- Review potential drought and water shortage risks, identify drought-related issues that may impact County residents, and provide input regarding short-term actions and long-term strategies to address identified issues
- Disseminate Task Force findings and recommendations to their respective agencies and organizations, as well as seek feedback that can be shared during Task Force meetings
- Attend Task Force meetings
- Review current drought conditions and facilitate coordination and communication during drought or water shortage emergencies

The PCT, a subgroup of the Task Force and comprised of County staff, is responsible for preparing and implementing the Resilience Plan. The PCT convenes and serves as staff to the Task Force. The PCT also consults with other County departments, relevant GSAs, and other local government and agency staff as needed to prepare the Resilience Plan.

## **5.0 Term**

Pursuant to CWC Section 10609.70, counties are required to maintain ongoing coordination, collaboration and cooperation during development and implementation of the Resilience Plan. Task Force membership is anticipated to be an open committee that can be joined or unsubscribed from via the Resilience Plan website.

## **6.0 Meetings**

It is anticipated that the Task Force will meet quarterly to discuss the technical information under review for inclusion in the Resilience Plan. The meetings will be scheduled with advance notice to Task Force members and may include the distribution of agendas and related materials.

After the Resilience Plan is developed, the Task Force will meet annually unless drought conditions necessitate more frequent meetings for action, planning and coordination.

Regular Task Force engagement is expected for those participants interested in developing the Resilience Plan.

## **7.0 Communication and Engagement Framework**

To assist in disseminating and collecting information to prepare the Resilience Plan, the County may implement a variety of communication and engagement actions. Outreach tools and activities on the Resilience Plan Website are to be used to inform, engage, interact with, and respond to interested parties and the public during the development and implementation of the Resilience Plan, including providing a mechanism for long-term engagement and assisting the County in responding to water shortage events.

## **7.1 Resilience Plan Website**

The County has established a website to support Task Force membership and distribute information associated with the Resilience Plan for interested parties to stay up to date on the Resilience Plan development and future implementation activities.

PCT members will maintain and update the website with timely and relevant information throughout the Resilience Plan development process, including items such as informational materials, Task Force meeting materials and summaries, and planning documents. The website may also be used as a location to post the Draft Resilience Plan and solicit public review and input.

It is intended that the informational materials and website content will be updated regularly at key implementation milestones, with periodic updates to reflect the status of the Resilience Plan's implementation. Following the completion of the Resilience Plan, the Resilience Plan website may be used to communicate updates on implementation activities and for communicating during a water shortage emergency.

## **7.2 Public Engagement**

The County intends to provide public notices to promote Drought Resilience-related public meetings, workshops, activities, and resources available during water shortage events. Notices may be distributed through existing County communications platforms, such as County websites and/or social media. During a water shortage event, it is anticipated that public meetings may be held in person and/or with a virtual meeting option (using an internet-based communication platform such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom) in general accordance with County policies.

## **7.3 Briefings to the County of Ventura Board of Supervisors**

The PCT may provide as-needed briefings to the Board of Supervisors of the County of Ventura on the development and implementation of the Resilience Plan and any upcoming activities. Briefings would be conducted during regularly scheduled Board of Supervisor meetings.

### **7.3.1 Public Information**

The website may include the Task Force Charter, contact information, educational information, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, surveys, and/or an overview about SB 552. The draft and final versions of Resilience Plan may be available online for review and comment by interested stakeholders and members of the public.

Community meetings may be recorded posted on the Resilience Plan website. Community meeting details may also be made available to the public on the Resilience Plan website.

## **7.4 Collaboration with Relevant Agencies**

The County may collaborate with other local and state agencies, such as local water suppliers, community services districts, groundwater management districts, and the California Department of Water Resources, to facilitate preparation of the Resilience Plan, support implementation of the Resilience Plan, and provide notice and coordinate responses to future water shortage events. Collaboration may include information and resource sharing, partnering to host joint meetings, and coordination of targeted outreach activities.