

Hi Folks,

The next SFPUC workshop will focus on their Long-Term (Climate Change) Vulnerability Assessment, and will likely take place on Friday, October 29 from 2-5pm. I'll let you know when the date is confirmed, but for now, please pencil it in.

This workshop will be very important because the new report will influence the Commission's thinking on how severe of a drought they should plan for. The current "Design Drought" arbitrarily combines two of the worst droughts from the last century — the six-year 1987-92 drought followed immediately by the driest two year period on record (1976/77) — to produce an extremely conservative 8.5-year drought. Our analysis of every extended drought over the past 1,100 years (based on tree ring data) found there were only a handful of sequences that encroached even slightly into year 7 of the Design Drought.

On top of planning for a manufactured mega-drought, the Design Drought operates under the assumption that water demand will increase by 25% (based on contractual obligations, not actual demand projections), and that the SFPUC will not develop any new alternative water supplies, such as recycled water.

Without explaining how the Design Drought works so that people can determine for themselves whether it's based on good planning, SFPUC staff have used it to sow fear that the new flow regime adopted by the State Water Board through the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan (40% of unimpaired flow between February and June) would lead to 50% rationing. This number is totally arbitrary, and depending on planning policy, could be anything from zero rationing to much higher rationing if they were to plan for a 10- or 15-year drought. For example, at current demand the SFPUC could manage the worst drought on record (1987-92) without requiring any rationing. 20% rationing would extend the SFPUC's water supply through year 7 of the Design Drought. Adding alternative water supplies could get the SFPUC through year 8 of the Design Drought.

We don't expect the Commission to make any big decisions on October 29, but the workshop will set the stage for consideration of removing a year from the Design Drought. If they do this, and agree to use reasonable demand projections, and commit to alternative water supplies, the SFPUC would have little to worry about regarding water supply, and could drop their opposition to the Bay Delta Plan.

We hope you'll be able to join us for the workshop on October 29!

-Peter

P.S. There was a fabulous editorial published in the Los Angeles Times on October 10. I encourage you to give it a quick read.

How the deal to stop draining Mono Lake can help settle California's future water wars

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-10-10/mono-lake-accord-balances-city-nature>

Peter Drekmeier
Policy Director
Tuolumne River Trust
peter@tuolumne.org
(415) 882-7252

