



ULARA

UPPER LOS ANGELES RIVER AREA WATERMASTER

Richard C. Slade – Watermaster

ularawatermaster.com

14051 Burbank Blvd, STE 300

Sherman Oaks, CA 91401

818-506-0418 PHONE

818-506-1343 FAX

REPORT OF ULARA WATERMASTER
VIRTUAL STATUS CONFERENCE of APRIL 20, 2021
SUPERIOR COURT, DEPARTMENT 52
HONORABLE ARMEN TAMZARIAN

A. Current Events in ULARA

1. The Watermaster and/or Assistant Watermaster continue to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee for the in-progress Los Angeles River Flows Project being performed by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP). The purpose of the study is to look at the range of effects of changes in flow in the LA River that are dependent on rainfall and wastewater treatment plant discharges with respect to uses in and around the river. From the project website:

“The State Water Board and the Los Angeles Water Board, in cooperation with local municipalities (including City of LA Bureau of Sanitation, City of LA Department of Water and Power, LA County Department of Public Works, and LA County Sanitation Districts), have initiated the Los Angeles River Flows Project (Project) to better evaluate the cumulative impacts of potential flow reductions. The Project will provide a science-based approach for assessing flow necessary to sustain beneficial uses.”

[\(https://www.sccwrp.org/about/research-areas/eco hydrology/los-angeles-river-flows-project/](https://www.sccwrp.org/about/research-areas/eco hydrology/los-angeles-river-flows-project/), 2020)

The Watermaster focuses only on issues associated with the ULARA Judgment and the aspects of groundwater modeling associated with the project research. Certain other ULARA Parties attend the TAC meetings in addition to the Watermaster. To date, the Watermaster’s office (in coordination with the Administrative Committee) has provided comments on multiple documents produced by the SCCWRP.

2. The California High-Speed Rail (HSR) proposed project alignment passes through ULARA, including the Burbank area of the San Fernando Basin, the largest of the four ULARA groundwater basins. The Watermaster’s office reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR) for the California High-Speed Rail (HSR) Burbank to Los Angeles Project Section, and submitted comments during the public review period. Descriptions of the project in the DEIR state that temporary, or possibly permanent, dewatering activities will occur within the alignment of the HSR that lies within the greater Burbank portion of ULARA, as part of the construction of the rail line. The Watermaster comment letter advised the document preparers that all extractions of groundwater from anywhere within the ULARA boundaries must be reported to the ULARA Watermaster, and requested that the ULARA Watermaster reporting requirements be incorporated into final versions of the Environmental



documentation. That comment letter also noted that the proposed dewatering areas may contain contaminated groundwater.

The comment letter submitted by the Watermaster can be viewed on the ULARA Watermaster website (<http://ularawatermaster.com/news>). At the request of Judge Susan Bryant-Deason at the September 2020 Status Conference, the Watermaster has compiled comment letters prepared by other agencies (e.g., the USEPA, the City of Glendale, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, and others).

3. The Watermaster is in the process of preparing an update to the safe yield evaluation of the Sylmar Basin. The last time the safe yield of the was assessed by this Watermaster was October 2016. This current update is to be completed by October 2021 to be in conformance with the 5-year limit for each new assessment, as described in the ULARA Judgment.

B. Status of Annual reports

1. The Annual Watermaster Report for Water Year (WY) 2018-19 is nearly complete and is expected to be submitted to Court, published on the ULARA Website, and uploaded to the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) website in May 2021; the document will be dated December 2020.
2. The Watermaster has received the necessary data from all reporting Parties and is working to prepare the Annual Report for WY 2019-20. A Draft of this WY 2019-20 Annual Report is expected to be available for review by the Parties in the next two weeks, and, pending ULARA AC approval, will be provided to the Court in May 2021.
3. Preparation of the Annual Groundwater Pumping and Spreading Plans for WYs 2018-19 through 2022-23 is in progress.

C. Ongoing Watermaster Activities

1. The Watermaster continues to submit information to the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) website to help verify that ULARA maintains its compliance with SGMA. Such data uploads occur on an annual basis. In addition, the Assistant Watermaster attended the Annual SGMA Adjudicated Area Reporting Workshop in February 2021. During this meeting, attendees provided input and answered questions from DWR program managers related to data input, reporting, and interpretation for their respective adjudicated groundwater basins.
2. The Watermaster continues to maintain compliance with DWR on its California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring program (known as CASGEM) for the four groundwater basins within ULARA. Data from the Parties for their Fall 2020 water level measurements were uploaded to the CASGEM system in October and November 2020. Data for Spring 2021 are being collected and processed now and will be uploaded in May 2021.



3. The Watermaster has continued to review and either approve or deny, based on site-specific conditions, the Low Impact Development (LID) projects within the City of Los Angeles portions of ULARA (i.e., the San Fernando & Sylmar basins).

D. Salt & Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP)

The Watermaster is nearing completion of work on the SNMP for the four groundwater basins within ULARA. This project has basically involved an assessment and proposed management of possible changes in concentration trends over time in total dissolved solids, nitrate (as NO₃), and chloride in the ULARA groundwater basins, as a result of the use of recycled water for various projects. As part of the SNMP process, five Technical Memoranda have been distributed to date for public review. The published Technical Memoranda can be accessed by the public by visiting www.ULARAwatermaster.com/SNMP.

Preparation of the necessary CEQA environmental documentation process is ongoing, and the Watermaster has been working with RWQCB-LA and ESA (the CEQA subcontractor for the Watermaster) to move the documentation forward. The Watermaster recently submitted additional information related to the modeling exercise at the request of RWQCB staff, and is working with ESA to finalize necessary documentation; documents are expected to be completed in May 2021.

E. ULARA “Policies and Procedures”

The original ULARA Watermaster prepared the first “Policies and Procedures” document in July 1987. Second and Third Updates to the document were subsequently prepared by that Watermaster, and were dated July 1993 and February 1998, respectively. The basic purposes of the “Policies and Procedures” document are: to provide a summary of the decreed extraction rights of the various parties to the Court-adjudicated ULARA region; to discuss the overall management of groundwater; and to state the basic rules for the activities of the Watermaster and the Administrative Committee.

The Watermaster (in conjunction with the Administrative Committee) is preparing an update to the most current “Policies and Procedures” document for ULARA. Numerous and substantial changes are being provided to bring that document up to date, and to help ensure that it is in conformance with the more current guidelines established by the DWR and other agencies, in regard to programs like CASGEM, SGMA, and SNMP, as well as reflecting the current practices of the Watermaster in relation to report preparation and approval, report distribution, etc.

The Watermaster expects to have several meetings and discussions with the Parties in regard to possible changes, deletions, and additions to the existing document. The Watermaster’s outside counsel (BB&K) will also be asked to review and provide possible comments to the document once it becomes available.