

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

January 28, 2025

Water Supply and Resiliency of Waterworks District 29 Infrastructure

Waterworks District 29 (“the District”) is responsible for providing water to residents and businesses in the City of Malibu and several unincorporated communities including Sunset Mesa and much of Topanga Canyon. The District serves a population of 22,826 residents through 7,514 service connections. The District’s 220 miles of water mains serve some of the most physically isolated and difficult geography in Los Angeles County with domestic potable water, which also serves the fire hydrant system.

Many of the communities served by the District were devastated by the Palisades Fire, particularly areas near Sunset Mesa and eastern Malibu. Every municipal water system has capacity limitations, and the Palisades Fire was unprecedented in size and intensity. However, on the tragic first day of the Palisades Fire, it has been reported that first responders may not have had adequate or consistent access to water, largely due to high winds grounding aerial firefighting operations, a critical tool in wildland fire suppression.

Given the physical and climatic vulnerabilities facing this system, the District has proposed several capital plans and projects to enhance the reliability and safety of this

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infrastructure. Several projects have been completed, many more are planned, and others are in active design or under construction. Recently completed projects include the Malibu Branch Feeder 30-inch Realignment and the Owen Tank Improvement.

Over the past two decades, several capital and project plans have been produced, designed to enhance local water supply, storage, conveyance, quality, and resiliency of the District's water system. These projects include expanding local storage tanks, strengthening conveyance pipes, hardening infrastructure to fire risks, and interconnections to neighboring water systems for redundancy. The County aggressively sought state and federal grants to support these capital plans; however, an unacceptable number of these projects have been completed. The advancement and completion of these projects, concurrent with rebuilding activities, is critical to recovery from the Palisades Fire, so that firefighters will have all critical water resources available once rebuilding is complete.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works to report to the Board in writing within 30 days with the following:

- a. Progress of retaining a consultant to review and prepare an independent after-action report on performance issues, if any, that have arisen in connection with Waterworks District 29 (The District) facilities and operations during the Palisades Fire;
- b. Identification of any system improvements (capital projects, system hardening, interconnections, and protocols) referenced in the Waterworks District 29 capital plan, Woolsey Fire After Action report, and the 2013 Waterworks District 29

“master plan”. For each item referenced in the master plan, include the project rationale, prioritization, relation to fire suppression, approval status for each government entity, originally planned project timeline, and specify whether the implementation of the project was delayed and, if so, the reasons for delays in project delivery;

- c. Description of The District’s funding streams, funding allocated for ongoing projects, future upgrades, maintenance and operations, and future funding needs; and
- d. Identification of any administrative, environmental, and permitting challenges that may have delayed or inhibited project delivery, as well as recommendations for local, state, or federal reforms or regulatory streamlining to accelerate these resiliency investments.

I, **FURTHER, MOVE** that Los Angeles County Department of Public Works report back to the Board in writing within 90 days with an assessment of current capital plans for Waterworks District 29, including a financial analysis to determine the resources needed for full implementation of the current capital plans, and a proposed schedule and strategy for updating these plans to enhance fire safety from urban wildfires.

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