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New City of San Diego Report Looks at Water Quality Issues in Local Watersheds

2020 WATERSHED SANITARY SURVEY IDENTIFIES POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO LOCAL WATER SOURCES

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego’s Public Utilities Department has completed the 2020 Watershed Sanitary Survey, which evaluates any potential water quality issues at the source and will be used as a basis for future watershed management and planning efforts. A watershed is an area of land that drains water into a specific body of water. Everything that is on the land, whether a natural feature or a human activity, is part of the watershed.

Issued every five years, the report identifies actual or potential causes of local source water contamination that might adversely affect the quality and treatability of water used by the City. The City’s tap water meets all state and federal drinking water health standards, which are the primary standards for treating and monitoring water.

“Development and other activities in our watersheds can have a profound influence on the quality of our water,” said Shauna Lorange, Director of the Public Utilities Department. **“The Watershed Sanitary Survey is important for identifying potential negative impacts and ways to better protect our watersheds.”**

The City’s local source water system consists of nine reservoirs with a combined capacity of over 550,000 acre-feet and more than 900 square miles of watershed lands tributary to these reservoirs. Local runoff from watersheds that’s captured in City reservoirs accounted for about 11% of total drinking water production from 2015-2020.

Since the last Watershed Sanitary Survey in 2015, the new report found that:

- Total area of residential and commercial development in the watersheds increased slightly by about 2%.
- A total of 412 new construction permits were recorded for onsite wastewater treatment systems located within the watersheds.
- The number of fires that occurred in the watersheds increased by about 8%.
- The number of leaking underground storage sites decreased by 53%.

- The number of sanitary sewer overflows increased by 36%.

The survey also offers a number of recommendations, including continuing and expanding public awareness programs to help protect watersheds. Another recommendation is for the City to continue implementing projects and programs to improve land management and water quality of source waters. All recommendations will be used for future watershed management and planning efforts.

The full 2020 Watershed Sanitary Survey, as well as past surveys, is available on the City's website at www.sandiego.gov/public-utilities/water-quality/watersheds/sanitary-survey.

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