



City of La Habra

"A Caring Community"

ADMINISTRATION

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August 21, 2023

The Honorable Maria Hernandez  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Subject: City of La Habra's Responses to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report's Findings and Recommendations**

Dear Judge Hernandez,

Please accept this letter as the City of La Habra's timely response to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report, *Historic Rain, Yet Drought Remains*.

The City understands that a large portion of Orange County is highly dependent on the Colorado River and the Colorado Aqueduct, and developing new sources of supply is an essential course to ensure sustained quality of life for those agencies with significant dependence on these constrained supplies.

La Habra's water supplies are derived from California Domestic Water Company (CDWC) via the Main San Gabriel Basin, the La Habra Groundwater Basin, and the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC). Purchases through MWDOC represent, at most, five percent of La Habra's annual water production. While La Habra has been assured that there is sufficient water supplies available to meet the City's needs through 2045, the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan addresses shortages through multiple demand reduction actions. Furthermore, La Habra continues to expand its water portfolio by purchasing additional shares of CDWC stock which entitles La Habra to access to Main San Gabriel Basin supplies, and by evaluating the expansion of the existing wellfield in the La Habra Groundwater Basin.

The responses to the Orange County Grand Jury Report's findings (F1-F12) and recommendations (R2-R4) are provided below.

**RESPONSES TO THE 2022-2023 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT,  
HISTORIC RAIN, YET DROUGHT REMAINS  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- F1. Future water supplies are impacted by climate change and current supplies will not meet future demands.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra partially disagrees with this finding.

**Explanation:** The City of La Habra agrees that future water supplies will be impacted climate change. However, the City's current water supplies will be sufficient to meet its anticipated future needs. In 2022, the City of La Habra adopted its Water Shortage Contingency Plan to serve as a guiding document that identifies key personnel and actions the City will undertake to efficiently manage water supplies during low precipitation years to continue to meet its current and future demands.

- F2. Climatologists predict future extended periods of low moisture with occasional wet years.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

- F3. Climate change is inevitable and is exacerbated by human behavior.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra partially disagrees with this finding.

**Comment:** The City of La Habra agrees that certain human behaviors contribute adversely to climate change. The City does not possess sufficient expertise in climate change to determine whether or not climate change is inevitable.

- F4. South Orange County relies primarily on the importation of water.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

- F5. Local water suppliers recognize that enhanced stormwater capture and storage, wastewater recycling, and infrastructure improvements will not be sufficient to address long-term forecast of drought and its effects on supply.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra partially disagrees with this finding.

**Comment:** The finding addresses Orange County water suppliers, as a whole. The City of La Habra utilizes water supply from the La Habra Groundwater Basin, California Domestic Water Company (via the Main San Gabriel Basin) and MWDOC, and is not reliant on water supplies from the Orange County Basin. While the City's Urban Water Management Plan indicates sufficient supply for the City through 2045, the La Habra Groundwater Basin is not yet developed for maximum safe yield. The City believes funding for further development of the Basin and enhancement to treatment processes at existing facilities would be more beneficial to La Habra than desalination.

**F6. There is significant water infrastructure planning, but inadequate implementation.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F7. The review and approval process for major water capital projects is cumbersome and overly restrictive.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F8. Failing to find solutions to water shortages will have a significant impact on the Orange County economy.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F9. Continued development in Orange County creates additional water supply needs.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F10. Conservation and efficient water use is essential.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F11. Increased outreach and public education are necessary.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**F12. Desalination has proven to be technologically and environmentally feasible and is slowly being embraced as a drought-resistant source of water.**

**Response:** The City of La Habra agrees with this finding.

**R2. Orange County water agencies should expedite the planning, development, and construction of desalination over the next five years to insure a sustainable and reliable drought-resistant source of water. F1-F12.**

**Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis.

**Comment:** The City of La Habra does not depend on water supplies from the Orange County Basin. Further analysis of desalination should be completed to determine the benefit for the City of La Habra.

**Implementation Schedule:** Not implemented. The City of La Habra cannot provide a definitive implementation schedule, as the City believes the analysis should be completed at the regional level.

**R3. The County of Orange and all Orange County cities should formulate an emergency development moratorium plan in anticipation of the Colorado River**

**water supply being constrained. The emergency moratorium plan should be developed by the end of calendar year 2023. F1-F12.**

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented.

**Summary:** The City of La Habra's Water Shortage Contingency Plan, Shortage Level 5, includes a Demand Reduction Action of a moratorium or net zero demand increase on new connections.

**R4. Orange County water agencies should update their public communication strategies. by calendar year end of 2023, to inform the public of lifestyle changes if additional water sources are not developed. F10, F11, F12.**

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented.

**Summary:** The City of La Habra has a communications plan in place to inform the public about water issues and conservation efforts, and can include additional outreach messaging, if necessary. The City believes any communications regarding the development of new regional water supplies should be addressed at the regional level.

The City of La Habra appreciates the need and timeliness of the Grand Jury's Report, *Historic Rain, Yet Drought Remains*. Thank you for the opportunity to provide responses to the report, and for the opportunity to clarify our unique position as an Orange County Water Agency. Should you have additional questions, please contact City Manager Jim Sadro at (562) 383-4010 or by email at [jsadro@lahabraca.gov](mailto:jsadro@lahabraca.gov).

Sincerely,

James Gomez  
Mayor

Cc: Orange County Grand Jury  
La Habra City Council  
Jim Sadro, La Habra City Manager  
Elias Saykali, La Habra Director of Public Works