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## *Town of Yountville*

September 16, 2003

Honorable Scott Snowden, Presiding Judge  
Napa County Superior Court  
825 Brown Street  
Napa, CA 94559

RE: Response to Napa County Grand Jury 2002-2003 Water Report

Dear Judge Snowden,

On behalf of the Town of Yountville, I am writing in response to the Napa County Grand Jury report dated June 4, 2003. The findings and recommendations for the Town of Yountville by the Grand Jury Committee and our responses are as follows.

### **Finding and Recommendation 1 Response**

The Town of Yountville joins the other agencies in the County in a joint response to this item. Please refer to the letter dated September 16, 2003 from the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District for our response to this item.

### **Finding 2**

*Public awareness of water issues needs to be heightened. Flowing water is constrained by inventory, funding, pipe capacity, entitlement programs and citizen consent.*

### **Response to Finding 2**

The Town of Yountville agrees with this finding.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Water consumption should be reduced.*

- *Landscaping practices should accommodate environmental conditions.*
- *Reclaimed water should be used for irrigation and landscaping whenever possible.*
- *Potable water, including well water, should be designated for indoor, as well as outdoor, use.*
- *Water saving ideas should be promoted and publicly rewarded throughout the County.*
- *Water use in excess of a base line amount should not be subsidized.*

## **Response to Recommendation 2**

For the last five years, water conservation has been a high priority for the Town of Yountville. Since the declaration of a Water Moratorium, the Town has implemented many innovative programs to initiate water conservation. Programs consist of cost saving and developer incentives, infrastructure improvements, and rate structures. Three years ago, a permanent staff position was created, which specifically dedicates staff time to these programs. The Town has and will continue our efforts, which to date have maintained or reduced our total consumption.

Programs such as cost saving incentives encourage residents to conserve water by saving money. The toilet rebate and volunteer retrofit program has been in effect since 2000 and has successfully retrofitted twelve percent of the population; it is estimated that the remainder of the volunteers will be retrofitted within the next year. This program provides customers with a cash rebate for retrofitting their high-use toilets and mandates that all new development must mitigate their water impacts by retrofitting customers who volunteer for the program. By replacing older high-use fixtures customers reduce their water demand and save money on their bills. The appliance rebate program has not been as effective as the toilet retrofit program; however, it is anticipated that as the price for water conserving clothes washers drop more residents will take advantage of the rebate offered.

The Town has provided reclaimed water for more than twenty-five years. Recent capital improvements have included new pipelines to distribute reclaimed water to Stag's Leap and Clos du Val vineyards. Chimney Rock vineyards has been using reclaimed water for irrigation for approximately twenty-five years. Locally, the Town irrigates the Vintner's Golf Course with reclaimed water. Currently, the Town distributes all the available reclaimed water in the peak irrigation season, which equals about 7 months out of the year. Providing reclaimed water to these users to meet their water demands for agriculture reduces the demand on groundwater resources.

The Town of Yountville has directed efforts to encourage water efficient landscaping. The Yountville Zoning Ordinance encourages drought tolerant, mature vegetation to be installed with new development. Currently in effect as part of a design review application, the applicant must submit a Landscape Plan and it is reviewed and assessed by the efficiency of the irrigation and the choice of plants. To encourage water efficient landscaping, the Town has partnered with the City of Napa for three years and co-hosted Water Wise Landscape Workshops. This year, a series of four workshops were conducted and the average attendance was 100 people per seminar. Two years ago, the Town planted a demonstration Water Conserving Garden and distributed a plant list. Three local parks have been renovated with drought tolerant landscaping. Furthermore, recent approvals of Master Development Plans have offset the projected demand for potable water by installing irrigation wells on and off-site.

The success obtained by partnering with the City of Napa initiated discussion of collaborative efforts between local municipalities and the possibility of forming a Countywide Water Conservation Committee. This committee is anticipated to be formed by the end of the year and an anticipated goal is to produce a publication for distribution to the public. Further cooperative efforts consist of a Water Wise Landscaping for the Napa Valley CD-rom, which the Town of Yountville has been actively a part of the organizing of, and has committed to purchasing a large quantity for our customers.

Promotion of programs and increased awareness on Water Conservation is a constant effort. Promotional activities include marketing at local special events, such as staffing a booth at the local farmer's market. The Town includes Water Conservation Tips on the local Public Access Channel, the Town newsletter, flyers, and messages on the water bills. Last year, the Town received a grant to provide in-room guest cards to the local inns on water conserving practices, such as participating in the linen reuse program. The next step the Town is researching is conducting water audits and public outreach to residents with above average water consumption. The Town is also partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to design Water on Request cards to display at the local restaurants.

The Town disagrees with the recommendation that subsidizing water operations has an impact on water consumption. The Town provides an annual subsidy from the General Fund to the Water Operation and Capital Funds. This is done to help reduce water rates for our customers by contributing monies received from visitor taxes back to the community. The impact of removing this subsidy would be an increase in rates of up to 40% to all users. Over 80% of our residential customers water use is at or below a normal or baseline amount. Based on the limited number of our customers, there would not be enough high-use customers to fund the loss of a subsidy from the General Fund. The current rate structure is tiered and based on the amount of water consumed. The more water used, the higher the rate. This is a financial disincentive for customers who use above-average amounts. Our rates start at \$1.26 per thousand gallons of water used and rise to a maximum of \$3.39 per thousand. This is a differential of 169% from base line to top end. We believe this form of rate structure does more to reduce water consumption than a flat-rate charge. Based on the usage patterns of our customers, removing the subsidy would not reduce water consumption, but rather put a large financial impact on our lower and fixed income customers.

The Town feels that it has implemented many water conservation programs and based on current statistics, water use has been reduced approximately 10% in the last five years. We will continue to place a high priority on conservation and participate in Countywide efforts to conserve this natural resource.

**Recommendation 3**

*A long-term, mutually beneficial contract between Yountville and the State of California needs to be implemented immediately in order to assure the maintenance that Rector Reservoir requires.*

**Response to Recommendation 3**

The Town agrees with this recommendation. This recommendation was included in the 1998/99 Grand Jury report and the Town's response remains the same. We are actively pursuing a mutually beneficial agreement with the State of California and are prepared to commence negotiations at anytime. The completion of this recommendation lies in the hands of the State and not the Town. Several State agencies have made claim to the water in Rector Reservoir although they have no means of using the amounts they are requesting. This includes Napa State Hospital and Fish and Game. Until the State can resolve these issues, the Town must wait for a long-term agreement. The Town is engaged in current discussions with the Department of Veterans Affairs and hopes that an agreement can be worked out by the end of the calendar year and signed by the Secretary of that agency.

Yours truly,



Kevin R. Plett  
Town Administrator

cc: Mayor & Council