

June 3, 2025

The Honorable City Council
c/o Petty F. Santos
Office of the City Clerk
Room 360, City Hall

Council File No. 25-0006-S17 - Special Motion 17 / Low Water Pressure / Dry Hydrants / Santa Ynez Reservoir - 2025 Windstorm and Wildfire Recovery

SUMMARY

This report provides the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) response regarding the status of Santa Ynez Reservoir prior to the January 2025 wildfires. The report also includes a discussion of LADWP's reservoir policies that address the risk of wildfires.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council RECEIVE AND FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

On January 7, 2025, the Office of the Mayor issued a Declaration of Local Emergency due to the development of a windstorm with gusts exceeding 100 miles per hour and extreme fire danger conditions—including active fires in the Pacific Palisades and Hollywood areas. An updated Declaration was issued on January 13, 2025, after the extensive damage caused by the Palisades Fire and other fires in the City. By the February 20, 2025 containment of the Palisades Fire, it had affected more than 27,000 acres. In addition to the loss of more than 5,000 homes and businesses, City infrastructure—including parks, a library, a recreation center, and retaining structures—were damaged or destroyed by the fires or were otherwise impacted.

On January 14, the City Council adopted Special Motion 25-0006-S17. It included a request that LADWP report on why Santa Ynez Reservoir was offline and report on reservoir policies as wildfires extend into the winter season.

DISCUSSION

During the January 2025 wildfires, the Santa Ynez Reservoir (Reservoir) was out of service and drained because it was awaiting repairs on its floating cover. The floating cover, made of chlorosulfonated polyethylene (CSPE), protects potable water in the reservoir to ensure water quality and to meet drinking water regulations. A tear in the floating cover was discovered in

January 2024 and quickly grew in size. LADWP took the reservoir out of service because the tear caused the Reservoir to be out of compliance with drinking water regulations. In February 2024, the Reservoir was drained to enable proper inspections to assess the full extent of the damage and initiate repair plans.

After draining the Reservoir and inspecting the tear, LADWP initiated a competitive solicitation process for the procurement of a repair contract, as is required by Los Angeles City Charter Section 371. Contract specifications and supporting documents were prepared, reviewed, and finalized between February 2024 and June 2024. The bidding period for the contract began in June 2024 and closed in July 2024. The purchase order was issued in November 2024. Due to the contractor's schedule, the work was initially scheduled to begin in late January 2025. Following submittal reviews and cleaning of the cover in preparation for the repairs, the contractor began work in March 2025. The contractor completed the repairs on March 28, 2025. LADWP began refilling the Reservoir on March 31, 2025. In the process of refilling the Reservoir, water was observed ponding on top of the cover. Divers were dispatched and discovered additional small tears and pin-sized leaks. Making additional repairs required LADWP to drain the Reservoir again, beginning on April 24, 2025. The reservoir is scheduled to be back in service mid- to late June 2025.

Regarding reservoir policies that address maintaining reservoirs as wildfires extend into the winter season, LADWP must balance water quality regulatory requirements—requirements that include undamaged and clean infrastructure—against any risks that may exist in taking reservoirs out of service for maintenance. The water system is designed with redundancies so that LADWP remains compliant with applicable regulations and the fire code, as was the case even when the Santa Ynez Reservoir was drained for repairs. LADWP will continue to maintain reservoirs for water quality regulatory compliance while monitoring the risks of natural disasters. Any forecasted risks will result in temporary postponement of maintenance until the risk is cleared.

FISCAL IMPACT

Receiving and filing this report has no fiscal impact.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Habib at Paul.Habib@ladwp.com or (213) 367-3846.

Respectfully submitted,



Janisse Quiñones
CEO and Chief Engineer

Cc: Hon. Traci Park, Councilmember, 11th District
Luis Gutierrez, Office of the Mayor