

Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission

STAFF REPORT

DATE: May 28, 2020

TO: Chairman and Members, Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission

FROM: Jim Smitherman, Water Resources Program Manager

SUBJECT: Presentation of the draft 2020 Washoe County Consensus Forecast; discussion and possible recommendation to the Western Regional Water Commission (“WRWC”) to make a determination that the draft Consensus Forecast for population in 2040 can be supported by the sustainable water resources set forth in the Regional Water Management Plan (“RWMP”); and possible direction to staff.

SUMMARY

The Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (“TMRPA”) has prepared the draft Washoe County Consensus Forecast 2020-2040 and submitted it to staff for comparison with the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources as set forth in the RWMP. The comparison consists of 4 parts: the 20-year population projection for Washoe County provided in the draft Consensus Forecast, the sustainable water resources estimate in the adopted RWMP, a 20-year water demand projection based on the Consensus Forecast, provided by the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (“TMWA”), and a comparison of the water demand projection to the sustainable water resources estimate set forth in the RWMP.

Since 2010, the Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission (“NNWPC”) has made the comparison and advanced a recommendation to the WRWC as to whether the Consensus Forecast population can be supported by the sustainable water resources identified in the RWMP. Two years ago, the WRWC approved the NNWPC’s recommendation and found that the draft Consensus Forecast population for 2038 (558,746 persons) was less than the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources set forth in the RWMP, and directed staff to inform Reno, Sparks, Washoe County, and the TMRPA that the forecasted population can be supported by the sustainable water resources as set forth in the RWMP.

The draft 2020 Consensus Forecast projects that the total population in Washoe County will grow from 469,801 (2019 certified estimate) to 569,385 in 2040. Compared to the 2018 version, which estimated a 20-year increase of about 107,000 persons, the projected growth increment is very similar. The 2020 Consensus Forecast projects a 20-year population increase of slightly less than 100,000 persons.

The 2016 RWMP includes an estimate of potentially available, sustainable water resources of approximately 190,500 acre feet per year. In addition, last year staff reported that an approximately 143,800 acre foot per year subset of the sustainable water resources are potentially available with no additional water importation.

Two years ago, using 2018 retail customer water use data and the 2018 Consensus Forecast, TMWA provided a County-wide water demand projection of approximately 100,100 acre feet for the 2038 population projection of 558,746. Given that the 2040 projection is within two percent of the 2038 forecast, a new demand projection was not requested of TMWA. A two percent increase in the demand projection would add about 2,000 acre feet.

Analysis and Conclusion:

- The draft 2020 Washoe County Consensus Forecast projects a 2040 population of 569,385, approximately two percent higher than the 2018 Consensus Forecast estimate for 2038 population;
- The 2016 RWMP includes an estimate of potentially available, sustainable water resources of approximately 190,500 acre feet per year and staff estimates 143,800 acre feet per year without additional importation;
- The water demand estimate to serve the projected 2038 population of 558,746 is approximately 100,100 acre feet, for which a two percent increase would be about 102,100 acre feet; and,
- By this comparison, the draft 2020 Washoe County Consensus Forecast population for 2040 is significantly less what the sustainable water resources identified in the RWMP can support, even without additional water importation.

BACKGROUND

In January 2010, the Regional Planning Governing Board (“RPGB”) adopted certain amendments to the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan (“Regional Plan”), and the RPGB Regulations on Procedure, identifying the NNWPC and the WRWC as the entities to perform a comparison, prior to the adoption of the Consensus Forecast, of the draft Washoe County Consensus Forecast and the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources as set forth in the RWMP. In April 2014, the TMRPA assumed the responsibility for preparing and publishing the Consensus Forecast. The RPGB Regulations on Procedure were amended at that time to reflect this change, and to make minor adjustments to the data sources and time frames for compilation and distribution of draft and final versions of the forecast.

According to the amended RPGB Regulations on Procedure, the NNWPC, upon receiving the draft consensus forecast document, will compare the draft population forecast with the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources as set forth in the RWMP and advance a recommendation for consideration to the WRWC. The WRWC will then make a determination based on the NNWPC’s recommendation concerning the comparison described above and inform Reno, Sparks, Washoe County, and the TMRPA as to its finding. In addition, the RPGB Regulations on Procedure state that if the WRWC determines the draft Consensus Forecast is less than or equal to the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources identified in the RWMP, the WRWC will submit the draft Consensus Forecast to Reno, Sparks, Washoe County, and the TMRPA with a finding that the forecasted population can be supported by the sustainable water resources as set forth in the RWMP.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the NNWPC advance a recommendation to the WRWC to make a determination that the draft Consensus Forecast population for 2040 is less than the estimated population that can be supported by the sustainable water resources set forth in the RWMP, and a finding that the forecasted population can, therefore, be supported by such water resources.

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