



Received
AUG 15 2023

August 9, 2023

The Honorable Kevin G. DeNoce
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura
County
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93003

Mr. Keith Frost
Foreperson
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: Casitas MWD Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report, Entitled "Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County"

Honorable Judge DeNoce:

In accordance with section 933.06 of the California penal code, the responses from the Casitas Municipal Water District to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report, referenced above, is hereby submitted as attached.

By way of email, copies of the responses are provided to the Ventura County Clerk, to Superior Court Jury Services, and to the Foreperson of the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury. We understand that Ventura County will provide copies to the State Archives.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at 805-649-2251 ext. 111 or mflood@casitaswater.com.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Flood".

Michael Flood
General Manager

Attachment: Casitas MWD Responses to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report entitled "Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County"

Cc: Michelle Ascencion, County Clerk-Recorder, clerk.recorder@ventura.org
Keith Frost, Grand Jury Foreperson, keith.frost@ventura.org
Brenda McCormick, Jury Services, jury-service@ventura.courts.ca.gov



COUNTY of VENTURA

Grand Jury

800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
Tel (805) 477-1600
Fax (805) 658-4523
grandjury.countyofventura.org

Response to 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Form (Please See California Penal Code Section 933.05)

Report Title: Water Availability for Wildfires in Ventura County

Responding Entity: President Richard Hajas, Casitas Municipal Water District

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the Findings numbered: 8, 12, 13, 14
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered: 1-7, 9, 10
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the Findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered 2 have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a summary indicating the timeframe for implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation to include: scope and parameters of the analysis or study and timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion with the agency or department head. The timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the report.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: August 9, 2023

Signed: Michael H. Hajas

Title: General Manager

Number of pages attached: 5

1918. 21. 27. 8
01. 9. 7. 4

1918. 21. 27. 8

2



**Attachment to Casitas Municipal Water District Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report, Entitled “Water Availability for Fires in Ventura County”
August 9, 2023**

Findings:

F-01: The Grand Jury finds that an adequate supply of water is essential for successful suppression of wildfires.

Response: Partially Disagree. It is important to recognize there are various methods and tactics used by firefighters depending on the circumstances. For suppression of large-scale wildfires, municipal water systems are typically not the primary method of suppression. Casitas Municipal Water District (Casitas) agrees water is essential for suppression of smaller-scale fires in developed municipal areas (primarily structures and limited brush fires).

F-02: The Grand Jury finds that the limited number of Fire Weather Watch (FWW) advisories amplifies the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols and training.

Response: Partially Disagree. Apart from the number of FWW advisories, Casitas understands the importance of emergency response procedures, protocols, and training in various formats (e.g. written, scenario drills, etc).

F-03: The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during a Fire Weather Watch event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

Response: Partially Disagree. Casitas does not know the extent of written procedures for other water providers in Ventura County. Casitas agrees planning for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and wildfire events is a best practice and has related written procedures in place. Casitas maintains an up-to-date Emergency Response Plan (ERP) as an internal guidance document, which is based on the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended actions to prepare for and respond to a wildfire: <https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/build-wildfire-resilience#IAC>. Casitas conducts annual mandatory training on the ERP and implements periodic drills for training purposes. Casitas is a member of the Southern California Edison (SCE) Public Safety Partner portal which provides advanced notifications of weather conditions, fire conditions, and potential power outages.

F-04: The Grand Jury finds that the limited number of Red Flag Warning (RFW) events amplifies the importance of establishing written procedures, protocols, and training.

Response: Partially Disagree. Apart from the number of RFW events, Casitas understands the importance of emergency response procedures, protocols, and training in various formats (e.g. written, scenario drills, etc).

F-05: The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during a Red Flag Warning event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

**Attachment to Casitas Municipal Water District Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report, Entitled “Water Availability for Fires in Ventura County”
August 9, 2023**

Response: Partially Disagree. Casitas does not know the extent of written procedures for other water providers in Ventura County. Casitas agrees planning for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and wildfire events is a best practice and has related written procedures in place. Casitas maintains an up-to-date Emergency Response Plan (ERP) as an internal guidance document, which is based on the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended actions to prepare for and respond to a wildfire: <https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/build-wildfire-resilience#IAC>. Casitas conducts annual mandatory training on the ERP and implements periodic drills for training purposes. Casitas is a member of the Southern California Edison (SCE) Public Safety Partner portal which provides advanced notifications of weather conditions, fire conditions, and potential power outages.

F-06: The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during an active fire event is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

Response: Partially Disagree. Casitas does not know the extent of written procedures for other water providers in Ventura County. Casitas maintains an up-to-date Emergency Response Plan (ERP) as an internal guidance document, which is based on the EPA’s recommended actions to prepare for and respond to a wildfire: <https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/build-wildfire-resilience#IAC>.

In the event of a wildfire threat, the ERP procedures include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Monitor weather and fire conditions through various websites (NOAA, Windy, Smoke, Camera, CalFire, VC Emergency, SCE PSPS). Be aware of regional wildfires.
2. Check fuel supplies are full.
3. Verify availability of generators and fuel delivery services.
4. Verify number of P95 NIOSH respirators available.
5. Distribute vehicle radios to supervisors in operations staff. Test communication with receiver located in the designated emergency operations center.
6. Verify satellite phones are charged and available.
7. Verify the availability of two weeks’ supply of chemicals for specific water treatment facilities.
8. Confirm location of Casitas’ emergency operations center, sleeping equipment, blankets.
9. Prepare outreach materials for public information.
10. Review status of brush clearance around District facilities.

F-07: The Grand Jury finds that written procedures for actions taken by water purveyors during Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events is a best practice that is lacking in Ventura County.

Response: Partially Disagree. Casitas does not know the extent of written procedures for other water providers in Ventura County. Casitas is a member of the SCE Public Safety Partner Portal which includes planning and information regarding PSPS events to support emergency management efforts. Casitas’ written procedures include, but are not limited to:

1. Standby portable generators have been acquired as back-up for emergency pumping.
2. In the event a preliminary PSPS notification is issued by SCE, Casitas staff will make changes to system reservoir levels to provide higher storage capacity.
3. Casitas’ system can “backfeed” water into select zones of higher demand should an emergency arise which allows for increased access to stored water throughout the system.

Casitas has also developed a webpage to provide public information regarding PSPS events: <https://www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/public-safety-power-shutoff-psps>

Attachment to Casitas Municipal Water District Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura County Grand Jury Report, Entitled “Water Availability for Fires in Ventura County” August 9, 2023

F-08: The Grand Jury finds that backup power to critical infrastructure is not always available.

Response: Agree. Casitas has permanent backup generators installed at some of the most critical facilities. Work is underway to install an additional permanent backup generator with financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Seasonal portable generators are rented and stored on-site ahead of the fire season to provide additional backup power.

F-09: The Grand Jury finds that SCADA systems are not equipped with backup power in all instances.

Response: Partially disagree. Casitas does not know the extent of backup power for other water providers in Ventura County. Casitas has permanent back up power for all critical SCADA facilities.

F-10: The Grand Jury finds that inadequate communication between adjoining water purveyors limits the ability to coordinate needed actions such as available water transfers.

Response: Partially disagree. Casitas works with the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (OES) to coordinate communication during emergencies. In addition, a representative from Casitas attends the Association of Water Agencies (AWA) Ventura County Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee meetings, and AWA coordinates communication among various water agencies. Casitas is not aware of the communication capabilities of all adjoining water purveyors.

F-12: The Grand Jury finds that enrolling in GETS and WPS would allow Ventura County water purveyors priority access to landline and cellular telephone networks in emergency situations.

Response: Agree. Casitas has set up the following communication formats for emergencies: 1) enrolled in the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) 2) enrolled in Wireless Priority Service (WPS) to provide priority access to telecommunication lines for phones registered through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and 3) enrolled in the Homeland Security Telecommunication Service Priority (TSP) to expedite repair of voice and data circuits. In addition, Casitas has installed HAM radio infrastructure.

F-13: The Grand Jury finds that enrolling in CalWARN would allow Ventura County water purveyors access to statewide resources.

Response: Agree. Casitas is a member of CalWARN.

F-14: The Grand Jury finds that Ventura County Fire Code section 4907.8 regarding brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure applies to all rural and unincorporated communities, and all cities except Fillmore, Oxnard and Ventura.

Response: Agree.

**Attachment to Casitas Municipal Water District Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura
County Grand Jury Report, Entitled “Water Availability for Fires in Ventura County”
August 9, 2023**

Recommendations:

R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish written operational procedures and training to provide for increased water supply for fire flow during FWWs, RFWs, active fires and PSPS.

Response: Have been implemented already. Casitas has operational procedures in place for PSPS events and wildfires. Casitas maintains an internal Emergency Response Plan (ERP) based on the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended actions to prepare for and respond to a wildfire: <https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/build-wildfire-resilience#IAC>. Casitas conducts annual mandatory training on the ERP and implements periodic drills for training purposes.

R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors have emergency power on site for all critical water infrastructure including SCADA systems.

Response: Has not yet been fully implemented but will implement in the future. Casitas has permanent generators at all critical SCADA facilities and some of the most critical water infrastructure. Casitas is working to install an additional permanent generator with financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Seasonal portable generators are rented and stored on-site ahead of the fire season to provide additional backup power. Relationships with equipment rental companies will be used if additional resources are required.

R-03: The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors establish common communication protocols with adjoining water purveyors to coordinate needed actions, including water transfers during active fires.

Response: Have been implemented already. Casitas and other water purveyors coordinate communications through the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services during active fires. Communication with other water purveyors can occur through the Ventura County OES, AWA Disaster Preparedness representative, and directly among water purveyors, as appropriate and accessible.

R-05: The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll their employees in the FCC Wireless Priority Service (WPS) providing cell phone priority in emergencies.

Response: Have been implemented already. All cell phones owned by Casitas and provided to staff are enrolled in the wireless priority service (WPS).

R-06: The Grand Jury recommends that water purveyors enroll in the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) providing landline phone priority in emergencies.

Response: Have been implemented already. Casitas has enrolled in the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) to provide priority access to telecommunication lines for phones registered through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

R-07: The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors enroll in CalWARN, a network of water and wastewater agencies that can provide emergency resources.

Response: Have been implemented already. Casitas is a member of CalWARN.

**Attachment to Casitas Municipal Water District Response to the 2022-2023 Ventura
County Grand Jury Report, Entitled “Water Availability for Fires in Ventura County”
August 9, 2023**

R-08: The Grand Jury recommends that all water purveyors provide brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure.

Response: Have been implemented already. Casitas maintains brush clearance around water tanks, water supply pumps, pump houses and related infrastructure as part of its routine maintenance activities. Routine clearance occurs up to the fence line enclosing the facility.

