

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



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Order Instituting Rulemaking for the)
Purpose of Reviewing and Potentially)
Amending General Order 156 and to)
Consider Other Measures to Promote) R.09-07-027
Economic Efficiencies of an Expanded) (Filed July 30, 2009)
Supplier Base and to Examine the)
Composition of the Utilities' Workforce)
_____)

**RESPONSE OF CALIFORNIA WATER ASSOCIATION TO THE
MARCH 17, 2010, ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER AND
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE SCOPING MEMO AND RULING**

Pursuant to the Scoping Memo and Ruling of Assigned Commissioner Michael R. Peevey and Administrative Law Judge (“ALJ”) Melanie Darling, issued March 17, 2010, in the above-captioned rulemaking, California Water Association (“CWA”) hereby submits its responses to the questions requested of utilities covered by General Order 156, as set forth in that ruling. Although the utility supplier diversity program (“USD”) activities of the Commission-regulated water utilities whose annual revenues exceed \$25 million are governed by Public Utilities (“PU”) Code Sections (§§) 8281-8286¹, and not General Order 156, CWA is pleased to respond to these questions on behalf of its member companies. CWA notes that these companies’ own supplier diversity initiatives have flourished under the April 19, 2004 “Memorandum of Intent to Implement a Supplier Diversity Program.”

The questions are:

- Identify specific one-year and two-year interim steps (e.g., increase MBE spend by 10% per year) you aspire to achieve in 2011 and 2012 in furtherance of your commitment to the target goals of GO 156. Include not only steps towards growth

¹ California Public Utilities Code; Chapter 7 – Miscellaneous Regulations; Article 5 – Women and Minority Business Enterprises; <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=puc&codebody=&hits=20>

in WBEs, MBEs, and DVBEs, but also any sub-group or procurement category which you have identified as particularly under-utilized by your company's procurement team (e.g., increase spend by 5% per year on minority disabled veteran suppliers, create a program for mentoring financial services suppliers, etc.)

- Is there any specific assistance you want to better advance your aspirations of achieving the identified interim steps for any procurement category or DBE group?

Specifically joining in these comments as interested parties are the following six Class A water utility members of CWA ("Water Utilities") that are subject to PU Code §§ 8281 through 8286: California American Water Company, California Water Service Company, Golden State Water Company, San Gabriel Valley Water Company, San Jose Water Company, and Suburban Water Systems. In addition, although it is not a member of CWA, Park Water Company also participates in CWA's USDP activities and is included in these responses for statistical purposes.

A. Identify specific one-year and two-year interim steps (e.g., increase MBE spend by 10% per year) you aspire to achieve in 2011 and 2012 in furtherance of your commitment to the target goals of GO 156. Include not only steps towards growth in WBEs, MBEs, and DVBEs, but also any sub-group or procurement category which you have identified as particularly under-utilized by your company's procurement team (e.g., increase spend by 5% per year on minority disabled veteran suppliers, create a program for mentoring financial services suppliers, etc.)

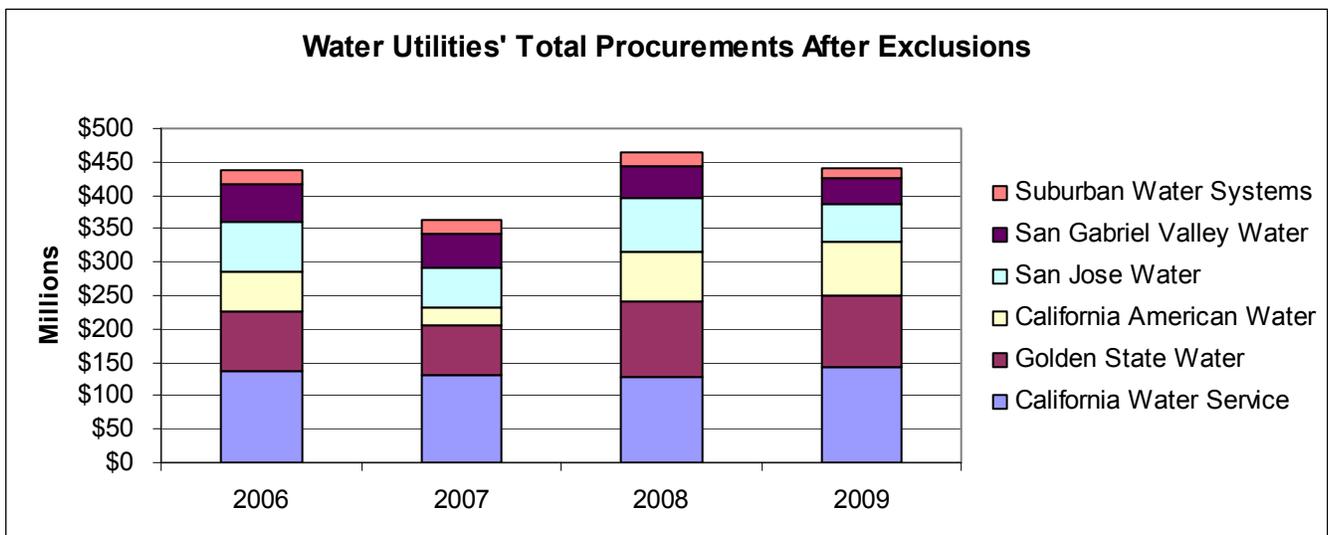
The Water Utilities have made steady, measurable progress in increasing WMDVBE spending during the four years their USDP program has been in existence. Collectively, they have made dramatic strides in: identifying and certifying applicable WMDVBEs; outreach programs; management commitment; staff training; Tier 2 spending; and reporting. Beginning in 2006 (the first year they began reporting) and

through 2009, the Water Utilities have grown their USDP program from \$24 million to \$46.4 million. As a percentage of eligible procurement, the Water Utilities diversity spend has grown from 5.26% to 10.63%, so the program has doubled in four years. For 2009, the Water Utilities' collective goal was to reach a double-digit percentage, which was achieved.

As far as specific interim goals for 2011 and 2012 are concerned, the Water Utilities' primary objective is to continue the upward trajectory of diverse spend in each of those years, which would mean an average increase of about 1.5% each year. The 21.5% total remains as the overall longer-term goal for the Water Utilities, collectively.

A word of caution, however: Unlike the telecommunications and energy utilities, the total procurement of the water utilities, after exclusions, has proportionately had, from year to year, much greater variability than that of their telecom and energy counterparts. This means that continued linear growth of diverse spend percentages in the water industry is not necessarily sustainable.

The reason is that the Water Utilities' capital expenditures and projects are quite lumpy, due to the relative size, impact and duration of individual projects.



For instance, Water Utilities' total procurement, after exclusions, in 2006 was \$457.5 million vs. \$383.5 million in 2007. We have seen that diverse spend is greatly affected by the varying composition of Water Utilities' capital projects. For example, it has been the Water Utilities' experience that the pool of diverse contractors is far greater for pipeline projects, for instance, than for water treatment plants, well construction, reservoir construction and specialized painting projects.

Within each category of diversity spend, the large majority of the Water Utilities' spend is with Hispanic suppliers, whose share ranges from 30 percent to nearly 100 percent. The second largest ethnic category is Asian-Pacific, followed by Black and Native American. WBEs also account for a relatively large percentage of the Water Utilities' diverse spend, while there are minimal amounts for DVBEs. Except for DVBEs, these percentages may be due to the demographic composition of the Water Utilities' service areas. An interim goal for the Water Utilities, therefore, would be to increase their percentages in the currently lower spend categories.

Two other interim goals for the water utilities involve establishing and, in some cases, expanding the available pool of candidates in their 2nd tier spend categories, as well as expansion of certified vendors.

Additional goals for the Water Utilities are:

- Developing a strong base of qualified suppliers that understand and support Water Utilities' commitment to water technology and water utility service excellence.
- Identifying and utilizing suppliers that are directly aligned with underrepresented and emerging communities that can help the utilities promote positive relationships with their customers.
- Including all qualified suppliers in bid opportunities.
- Seeking out diverse suppliers that can give Water Utilities access to new and innovative utility service technologies.

- Strengthening the economic vitality of their supply chain by using highly qualified diverse suppliers.
- Continuing to encourage prime contractors to use WMDVBE subcontractors and developing much greater consistency with subcontractor performance.
- Continuing focus on internal training programs, with emphasis on providing incentives to employees in order to grow the Water Utilities' diverse spend, as well as external incentives to prime contractors so as to increase 2nd-tier spend.
- Improving internal technical processes such that Water Utilities are better able to track their diverse spending and to maintain their data bases of eligible and certified vendors.

B. Is there any specific assistance you want to better advance your aspirations of achieving the identified interim steps for any procurement category or DBE group?

To the extent allowed through the ratemaking process, the Water Utilities are seeking assistance from outside consultants, as well expanding their interaction with the Supplier Clearinghouse. With the former, such assistance involves:

- Reviewing and analyzing past and current Water Utility supplier diversity activities and programs;
- Conducting diversity spend assessments of participating Water Utilities, including gap analysis, challenges and deficiencies;
- Assessing best practices from other utilities and recommending which programs, procurement processes and practices are most applicable for Water Utilities;
- Assisting the Water Utilities in preparation and implementation of action plans;
- Training and education of utility staff;
- Communication and outreach to the diverse supplier community;
- Sourcing of suppliers (e.g., development of an industry-specific database, creation of company-specific supplier registration portals, and certification assistance);
- Assisting the Water Utilities in increasing their 2nd-tier spend; and
- Developing a Water Utility web site devoted exclusively to supplier diversity procurement.

With respect to the Supplier Clearinghouse, the Water Utilities are hopeful that the Clearinghouse will be able to devote resources to help expand certification of water-

related vendors, as well as assisting the vendors themselves with the certification process. For instance, if the Clearinghouse is able to develop a reporting system that will provide utilities with a comprehensive list of certified vendor per industry and sorted by geographic area and discipline (i.e., product or service offering), that will be very helpful. Also, CWA hopes that the Clearinghouse will participate in CWA's supplier diversity contractor workshops, as well as partner with individual water utilities to help them target and identify potential suppliers, and then provide training and support to these suppliers. Further assistance from the Clearinghouse could come in the form of documenting and publicizing a calendar of supplier diversity events that would provide additional outreach opportunities for the Water Utilities.

A third area for assistance might come from improved networking and working relationships with industry and professional advocacy organizations like the various regional and ethnic Chambers of Commerce. Such relationships will help Water Utilities develop and expand their universe of eligible water-related vendors with whom to contract for needed utility services.

A fourth area of assistance is internal in nature. Specifically, the principal steps being taken by Water Utilities to increase their diverse spend involves continued collaboration with the other water companies, continued participation in the Commission's own activities (e.g., Small Business Expos, Connections, Green Job/Procurement conferences, etc.), and local supplier outreach and assistance in certification. For instance, the Water Utilities have engaged in successful shepherding of vendors through the certification process, and they will continue to assist those not previously certified.

It is important to note that the Water Utilities have a number of vendors still awaiting WMDVBE certification. They also have a number of vendors who are reluctant to apply for WMDVBE certification, largely because of a lack of familiarity with the program, a lack of resources and time to complete the comprehensive and somewhat arduous application process, and the modest size of the contracts or business involved. To this end, some companies are trying new approaches such as hosting supplier diversity workshops that, among other things, will be designed to dispel some of the myths and anxiety associated with the certification process. They will use these workshops to encourage vendors to certify, re-certify or partner with prime contractors as a certified diverse vendor.

Further, all of the Water Utilities are encouraging their prime contractors to develop and use qualified MBE sub-contractors. In fact, they all have or are planning to have either formal programs in place or statements in their procurement documents for just this purpose. Additionally, the Water Utilities are working with their local communities and businesses to help increase utility MBE, WBE and DVBE procurement.

Finally, CWA would like to open a discussion with Commission staff about performance metrics as they relate to Water Utilities. Specifically, CWA believes that the single-minded pursuit of percentages – i.e., 15% MBE, 5% WBE, and 1.5% DVBE – may be a poor metric for evaluating progress in diversity procurement.

As CWA noted earlier, these percentages can swing wildly on a year-to-year basis for reasons that are beyond the control of the utility, such as the composition and scale of construction projects. The Water Utilities propose to introduce other kinds of

metrics and give them equal prominence with current spending percentages, such as the number of diverse vendors added, the total number of diverse vendors used, and perhaps the percentage of diverse vendors to total vendors (not including vendors in excluded categories). These tailored metrics could be the basis for an update of the 2004 Memorandum of Intent, which could guide the Water Utilities as they move forward with their utility supplier diversity programs.

CONCLUSION

CWA appreciates the fact that the Commission has been supportive of the Water Utilities' efforts in supplier diversity procurement. This support has played an important role in the Water Utilities' success to date, and CWA looks forward to pursuing the Water Utilities' interim goals.

DATED: May 26, 2010

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Jeannie Wong, hereby certify that on this date I served the foregoing RESPONSE OF CALIFORNIA WATER ASSOCIATION TO THE MARCH 17, 2010, ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE SCOPING MEMO AND RULING, by electronic mail or hand delivery on the service list for R.09-07-027.

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Executed this 26th day of May, 2010, in San Francisco, California.

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