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EXPERTS DEVELOP ACTION PLAN FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S WATER CRISIS AT AQUARIUM AND LONG BEACH WATER DEPARTMENT FORUM

Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and Congressman Alan Lowenthal reiterate importance of water conservation and cooperation

November 25, 2014, Long Beach, CA—Water experts from Southern California and beyond convened at the Aquarium of the Pacific yesterday to identify new strategies to deal with the water crisis now and meet increased demand in an uncertain future. Participants included meteorologists, hydrologists, oceanographers, communicators, municipal water department managers, and others. The Long Beach Water Department asked the Aquarium to convene the forum to explore ideas for dealing with the drought and to develop an action plan. Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and Congressman Alan Lowenthal also spoke to reporters at a press conference and emphasized their support for new and innovative water conservation measures.

“Southern California’s reservoirs are at record-low levels, we expect drastically lower allocations from the State Water Project next year, and our reserve of groundwater is being depleted,” said Jerry Schubel, president and CEO of the Aquarium. “We must adopt a new and permanent culture of water conservation in California and reduce water use across the board, from agricultural and industrial to domestic and municipal uses.”

Participants discussed action items necessary to reduce the impacts of a drought and ensure water supply in an uncertain future. These included: restrictions on outdoor water use, such as lawns and highway medians, cemeteries, large commercial landscapes, and golf courses; a new tiered pricing structure for water to reflect high use while protecting those least able to pay; a groundwater inventory; and a public education program.

Opportunities identified by the forum to improve supply included expanded use of water recycling, stormwater capture, smart meters for consumers, permeable pavement, and certified greywater systems, as well as investment in water infrastructure to eliminate loss. They also emphasized the need to keep all possible contributors “on the table” such as desalination and improving the efficiency of Delta transfers. Participants urged the clean-up and management of groundwater for sustainable use so that surface and groundwater can be managed together in a comprehensive management program. They called for targeted research on high priority issues needed for state water management.

“The forum participants have come up with tremendous ideas to move California forward when it comes to water conservation,” said Kevin Wattier, general manager of the Long Beach Water Department. “Long Beach is already a leader in water conservation, and we look forward to implementing new measures to do even better.”

The Aquarium regularly hosts scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders in forums to search for solutions to the most pressing and complex problems facing the ocean and environment. For more information, visit aquariumofpacific.org.

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