

BUSINESS

# WAPA board authorizes Hodge to add water production at Harley Water rationing back in effect on St. Thomas Got water?

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ST. THOMAS - The V.I. Water and Power Authority board held an emergency meeting Friday to authorize adding 1.5 million gallons of reverse-osmosis water production a day for one year at the Harley Plant.

"It's an emergency because we need it now," said authority spokeswoman Cassandra Dunn.

The board amended a contract with Seven Seas Water Corporation to maintain and operate the temporary reverse-osmosis system scheduled to begin production on St. Thomas within one month, Dunn said.

"This is one that will be installed within the next several weeks," Dunn said. "It will be able to fill our tanks within the next 30 days."

Dunn said the additional production will help WAPA meet demand for water more quickly.

Reverse osmosis filters seawater. The existing desalination plants on St. Thomas use heat to convert saltwater to produce steam - a process that depends heavily on fuel, Dunn said.

"We also know that as a result, the customers will realize some savings in the next calculation in the LEAC, because we'll be using reverse osmosis instead of the generators," Dunn said.

The utility hopes the temporary addition will bridge the utility's contracted plan to create permanent reverse-osmosis production on St. Thomas, which is scheduled to begin within nine months to one year, according to WAPA Executive Director Hugo Hodge Jr.

"While the hope had been that the existing method of producing water would hold on until the implementation of the permanent reverse-osmosis water system, we have concern if we will make it until then, given the existing condition of some of the boilers," Hodge said.

The units have been meeting the bare minimum output to meet demand, and to fix a unit, it must be taken off-line, he said.

Hodge cited the 1.5 million gallons produced by reverse osmosis daily on St. Croix daily that he said stabilized the Richmond Plant's - and St. Croix's - water system.

WAPA will pay \$4.42 per 1,000 gallons for the temporary service from Seven Seas. That rate accounts for about 35 percent of the current costs of desalination on St. Thomas.

The authority will continue operating the desalination plants to meet the average daily 1.8 million-gallon demand for water on St. Thomas and to maintain storage for the St. Thomas-St. John District.

Hodge said the reverse-osmosis system could reduce next quarter's water LEAC by \$2 per 1,000 gallons.

The board authorized Hodge to negotiate any additional terms, Dunn said.

Board Chairwoman Juanita Young; Vice-Chairman Gerald Groner; and board members Noel Loftus, Donald Francois, Cheryl Boynes-Jackson, V.I. Licensing and Consumer Affairs Commissioner Wayne Biggs, V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Alicia Barnes and V.I. Energy Office Director Karl Knight attended the emergency meeting.

Board member Brenda Benjamin was absent.

- Contact reporter Michael Todd at 774-8772 ext. 304 or email mtodd@dailynews.vi. ST. THOMAS - The V.I. Water and Power Authority produced water, as scheduled, from 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Friday on St. Thomas.

"The boilers are on. The water plants are on," said authority spokeswoman Cassandra Dunn. "We're producing water and building storage."

The authority began rationing water Nov. 15 to replenish water reserves lost after Unit 11, a boiler, sprang a



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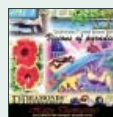
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leak that had to be fixed, Dunn said.

The boiler was repaired and brought online Tuesday night, returning two desalination plants to service.

Repairs to Units 11 and 21 in September left most WAPA water customers on St. Thomas dry for 16 hours a day for one month.

Dunn said the authority expects to resume regular, 24-hour water production to its 5,500 customers on St. Thomas within seven to 10 days.

Once enough water is stored at the Harley Plant, the authority would extend the rationing hours, she said.

"The minute the storage looks like we could relax the schedule, we will definitely add more hours," Dunn said.

The authority expects the rationing to take less time to repair than September's water shortage on St. Thomas because two water plants are online. Only one plant was operable during the September shortage. Once both units returned online, it took 2½ weeks to replenish enough water to serve all customers all day on St. Thomas, according to WAPA officials.

- Contact reporter Michael Todd at 774-8772 ext. 304 or email [mtodd@dailynews.vi](mailto:mtodd@dailynews.vi). How is WAPA's water rationing affecting you? How are you dealing with it? Please contact Daily News reporter Michael Todd at 774-8772 ext. 304 or send him an email at [mtodd@dailynews.vi](mailto:mtodd@dailynews.vi). Your name is not necessary.

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