SWEETWATER SPRINGS WATER DISTRICT

TO: Board of Directors **AGENDA NO. V-C**

FROM: Steve Mack, General Manager

Meeting Date: March 4, 2010

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION/ACTION RE DISTRICT TOILET REBATE PROGRAM

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve District funding of a toilet rebate program.

FISCAL IMPACT: Up to $10,000 for the rebate program and some amount of reduced income due to reduced water sales.

DISCUSSION:

Replacing older toilets with more efficient toilets, 1.6 gallons per flush or less, has been a water conservation best management practice (BMP) for many years. That BMP has taken the form of a rebate program, or equivalent. This BMP has been included in statewide and regional efforts including the California Urban Water Conservation Coalition (CUWCC), which is a statewide organization aimed at an industry based consensus approach to developing water conservation standards, the Department of Water Resources Urban Water Management Plans (BMP's in there are based on CUWCC programs), State Water Resources Control Board actions, and approvals for receiving water from the State Water Project and Bureau of Reclamation projects. According to the Sonoma County Water Agency, a 1.28 gallon per flush fixture provides water use reduction of approximately 8,300 gallons per year when compared to a 3.5 gallon per flush fixture.

The District is involved in meeting statewide standards through our participation in water rights (State Water Resources Control Board) and through completing the five-yearly Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) which is accepted and reviewed by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). One of the comments on the 2005 UWMP was that there was no mention of meeting the toilet rebate program BMP. Water rights on the Russian River will remain a contentious item and a minimum compliance with statewide BMP's may become an issue for the District. Toilet rebate programs are common elements of up-to-standard water conservation programs.

The District is currently the beneficiary of a rebate and a direct install toilet replacement program funded by the Russian River County Sanitation District for customers of that district which includes much of the District's Guerneville system. Under the Sanitation District's programs, their customers can apply for a rebate of up to $150 per toilet or have a cooperating plumbing contractor replace their existing toilet at no cost to the customer. The Sanitation District also has a $125 rebate program for high efficiency clothes washers. Sweetwater Springs Water District staff get many calls from District customers regarding the rebate programs. If they are customers of the Sanitation District we tell them how to apply for the rebates. At the date of this report, Sanitation District records showed that they had

processed 38 toilet rebates and 290 direct installations. The higher number of direct installs can be attributed to the lower cost and ease for the customer and the direct outreach that is being done by the participating plumbing contractors. The direct install program is costing approximately $440 per fixture for the Sanitation District. The Sanitation District has processed 13 clothes washer rebates. The County Sanitation District rebate applies to toilets manufactured prior to 1992 when 1.6 gallon per flush efficiency standard went into effect in California and requires replacement with toilets (that are on an approved list) that meet a 1.28 gallon per flush standard.

The proposal is to extend the $150 per toilet rebate program to areas of the District which are not covered by the Sanitation District rebate programs. We do not propose to include the plumber installation program (too expensive) nor the clothes washer rebate program (too few). Inclusion of the rebate program in the District's Water Conservation Program will allow the District to claim full participation with this BMP and give participation in this standard to all customers of the District.

We recommend an initial allocation of $10,000 for this program. When we become near the end of the allocation, the District can review the progress and benefits of the program, including coordination with Sanitation District programs, to determine if more money should be allocated.