



Fact Sheet: Securing Colorado River Supplies

An Urban-Agriculture Partnership with The Quechan Tribe



Building on their history of partnership, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation have launched a two-year pilot program to conserve Colorado River water and make it available to Southern California cities, while supporting the Tribe's agricultural economy. Under the voluntary program, Metropolitan will pay interested farmers not to grow crops on a portion of their lands between April and July in 2022 and 2023. The conserved water will be made available for urban needs and help California boost record-low water levels in Lake Mead.

The Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation

The 45,000-acre Quechan tribal lands lie along the Colorado River in southeast California and southwest Arizona. The Reservation is bisected on the south by Interstate 8 (I-8), with the Imperial Irrigation District's All-American Canal along its northeast and southwest corners.



Producing Multi-Benefit Solutions, Together

Up to 1,600 acres of farmland seasonally fallowed

Up to 3,500 acre-feet of water savings*

Up to \$1.6 million in payments to participating farmers and the Quechan Tribe

*Actual water savings to be determined during pilot

*An acre-foot is enough water to serve roughly three Southern California households for a year

Different Seasons, Different Crop Values

Desert agriculture realizes a market advantage in the winter for high-value vegetables such as lettuce and broccoli. In the hot summer, farmers typically grow lower-value, water-intensive commodities such as grains and grasses. By fallowing a portion of their land during hotter months, farmers on Quechan tribal land earn financial incentives in exchange for not growing these water-intensive crops.

Working Together to Promote Colorado River Sustainability

Decades of drought and climate change are compounding an existing imbalance between supplies and demands on the Colorado River. These conditions have brought Colorado River reservoirs to record lows. Lake Mead, behind Hoover Dam at the Arizona-Nevada border, has dropped so dramatically that the federal government has declared its first official shortage, impacting water deliveries to Arizona and Nevada. The Quechan-Metropolitan seasonal land fallowing program will support the 500-plus Plan, an effort by Lower Basin water users to add 500,000 acre-feet or more of water to Lake Mead in 2022 and 2023 to reduce the risk of the reservoir reaching critically low elevations.

“Water is a sacred part of the Tribe’s culture, past, present, and future, and being a good steward of our water resources is a fundamental tribal value. We are pleased to expand our partnership with Metropolitan for the good of our homeland and the entire Lower Basin community.”

- Quechan Tribe President
Jordan Joaquin

Innovative Partnerships to Conserve Water

The challenges on the river require bold action, innovative solutions and strong partnerships. Metropolitan has water conservation partnerships in place with every agricultural entity in California that uses Colorado River water, including Imperial Irrigation District, Palo Verde Irrigation District, the Coachella Valley Water District and the Bard Water District.



For more information about the Metropolitan-Quechan Seasonal Land Fallowing Program, contact Kira Alonzo at (213) 217-6489, kalonzo@mw dh2o.com or Anna Garcia at agarcia@mw dh2o.com

About Metropolitan

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative of 26 member agencies – cities and public water agencies – that serve 19 million people in six counties. Metropolitan imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies and helps its members develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource management programs.

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