



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Office of the Board of Directors*

January 20, 2017

Mark Muir, Chairman  
Jim Madaffer, Vice Chair  
San Diego County Water Authority  
4677 Overland Avenue  
San Diego, California 92123

Dear Chair Muir and Vice Chair Madaffer:

Metropolitan is in receipt of your recent letter sent to a number of cities and retail agencies throughout Metropolitan's service area criticizing Metropolitan's regional conservation program and recent effort focused on turf removal.

As part of the Southern California water community, I assume you are aware of Metropolitan's and all Southern Californian water agencies' incredible track record on conservation and demand management over the past 25 years. We began making important conservation improvements in the 1990s with the largest toilet replacement program in the nation. This was followed with a shower head replacement program and development of rebate programs to incentivize the widespread adoption and retrofitting of water saving devices. Metropolitan also worked closely with trade associations, businesses, and federal agencies in developing industry criteria for water savings. Metropolitan further sponsored and supported state legislation spurring development of water saving performance criteria that lock in savings on new devices generating code-based water savings without financial subsidies. Recently, Metropolitan sponsored the landmark "20% x2020" legislation which passed in 2009 that is driving statewide demand reduction.

This systematic and comprehensive approach to conservation has proven very successful generating a marked reduction in per capita household water use throughout Southern California. Thanks to this approach, Southern California has significantly reduced its reliance on imported water from 1990 while adding more than 5 million people to our service area. All of Southern California should rightfully be proud of these accomplishments.

This past decade in California has been extremely dry with two Governor-declared water emergencies. The drought's darkest period was 2013-2015, which shattered a number of records for highest recorded temperatures, lowest snow pack, least precipitation and runoff, and smallest State Water Project allocation - amongst other dubious distinctions. Governor Jerry Brown took action declaring an emergency coupled with an executive order that called for a mandatory reduction in all retail water use by 25% and established a statewide goal of removing 50 million square feet of turf.

Metropolitan's Board demonstrated leadership by responding to this challenge with bold and aggressive action. Over the two-year period of 2014-2016, Metropolitan's Board approved an unprecedented campaign of demand management actions that budgeted \$450 million for public outreach, and rebates for water saving devices and turf removal.

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And the public responded. Applications for turf removal rebates soared from 3,600 in a six month period in 2014 to almost 50,000 over the same period in 2015. Interest in device rebates likewise soared with requests for efficient toilets jumping from 14,000 to more than 65,000 in the same time frame. Southern California built on its 25-year track record of conservation and met the Governor's conservation goal. Metropolitan more than tripled the Governor's statewide goal for turf removal and removed more than 160 million square feet of turf throughout our service area.

Responding to California's challenging drought, Metropolitan's historic investment in conservation will be remembered as the strategic moment when Southern California's landscape transformed from lawns. Governor Jerry Brown personally met with Metropolitan's Board to thank Metropolitan for its statewide leadership on conservation.

Your letter attempts to twist this strategic and historic investment into "reckless" and "out of control" spending. Turf rebates generate water savings over the life of the program at approximately \$600 per acre-foot, as has been reported to Metropolitan's Board. Yet, your letter only refers to a single year of savings to falsely come up with a \$30,000 per acre-foot figure. You mischaracterize Metropolitan's internal auditor's report as "scathing" when it actually finds less than a 2% variance between square footage removed and square footage reported, better than industry averages for turf removal programs.

Most hypocritically, you fail to mention that SDCWA's website throughout this period steered San Diegans to Metropolitan's turf removal rebate program and lauded the benefits of water smart landscaping. City of San Diego Councilmembers Alvarez and Cate wrote in support of Metropolitan's program. When Metropolitan's Board was making this investment, City of San Diego Mayor Faulconer was announcing the doubling of the City's own turf replacement budget. In all, San Diego County received approximately 23% of Metropolitan's rebates over this period. Numerous San Diego golf courses, homeowners associations, schools, and businesses, such as San Diego Gas & Electric, received turf removal rebates and expressed their support and appreciation.

Despite the continued efforts of SDCWA to criticize virtually every action by Metropolitan, I am pleased that the overwhelming majority of the Metropolitan Board remains steadfast in support of a balanced approach to fund conservation, local resource development and reinvestment in our imported water supply systems. And I am very pleased that many San Diego area businesses and residents embraced our conservation effort and lowered their water use.

We lead best when we lead by example. I want to thank the forward looking people in the San Diego area for recognizing the importance of conservation and taking action. I only hope that someday the SDCWA will also demonstrate a similar spirit of regional cooperation and leadership.

Sincerely,



Randy Record  
Chairman of the Board