



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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Oct. 10, 2016

**AS SIXTH YEAR OF DROUGHT LOOMS, METROPOLITAN
PLANS TO MEET REGION'S 2017 IMPORTED WATER NEEDS
Water-saving efforts by consumers, businesses
still needed, along with modernized state water system**

Even with an uncertain storm season ahead and a potential sixth year of drought, increases in water reserves as well as the region's strong commitment to water efficiency and conservation have positioned the Metropolitan Water District to meet Southern California's imported water needs, officials said today.

Metropolitan board Chairman Randy Record and General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger joined Mark Cowin, director of the California Department of Water Resources, to update water supply conditions and drive home the importance of continued conservation to Southland consumers and businesses as the state enters the new water year.

"The reality is that California is still in a drought. We're just not in a state of emergency," Record said. "Heading into 2017, we're hoping to build on the supply momentum created by Southern California's ongoing water-saving efforts and improved storage conditions this year."

While water conditions improved in Northern California this year, Cowin acknowledged that much of the Southland remains in extreme drought. He also cautioned that State Water Project reservoir storage is below historical averages heading into 2017.

"The increased rain and snow the state received up north this year provided some relief from drought," Cowin said. "But without more storms this winter, the state will quickly be facing the same severe conditions we saw in 2014 and 2015."

With October marking the start of the new water year, Kightlinger said the Southland is better positioned to manage the drought due to increases in the region's water reserves in reservoirs and local groundwater basins. This year, Metropolitan received a 60 percent allocation from the State Water Project, more than the last three years combined. The SWP typically provides about a third of Southern California's water. He also credited successful ongoing regional conservation efforts for driving down water demands.

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“The increased state supplies and local water-saving is allowing us to start rebuilding our storage by up to 500,000 acre-feet by the end of the year. That’s the first increase to regional reserves in four years,” Kightlinger said. (An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by two typical Southland households.)

At Diamond Valley Lake, the district’s largest reservoir, Metropolitan plans to increase storage to more than 70 percent of capacity this year. The district also made about 200,000 acre-feet of water available to help replenish local groundwater basins significantly tapped during the drought.

Even with the storage gains, Kightlinger cautioned that uncertainties remain regarding the future of the Southland’s supplies from the Colorado River and Northern California, the district’s two imported water sources. After 16 drought years, storage in the Colorado River system is at less than 40 percent, increasing the risk of shortage conditions in coming years. The reliability of supplies delivered from Northern California also is at risk due to pumping restrictions and deteriorating environmental conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and an aging state water system.

“Those pumping restrictions could cost Southern California of up to a third of our State Water Project supplies in average years unless the system is updated,” Record said. “You can just look at Diamond Valley Lake this year to see the impacts. Chances are we would have been able to fill the lake had it not been for pumping cutbacks.”

To address Delta issues, Metropolitan has supported the planning effort by state and federal agencies, known as California WaterFix. The proposed solution would upgrade the water delivery system with new intakes in the northern Delta, state-of-the-art fish screens and twin tunnel pipelines to more safely and effectively convey water to the existing California Aqueduct system.

“Climate change means we are going to have longer droughts and hotter weather. The system needs to be modernized to take better advantage of water when it’s available. Under the existing system, the Southland’s state project supplies are not reliable,” Record said.

Metropolitan’s long-term water resource plan also emphasizes lowering demands through conservation and developing new supplies through more local projects like water recycling. Over the next two years Metropolitan will offer about \$140 million for conservation rebates and continue to spread the conservation message with its \$2.2 million multi-language advertising campaign. The agency’s H2Love campaign reminds Southern Californians to Love Water, Save Water and make conservation a way of life.

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