



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

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## IMPROVED SUPPLY CONDITIONS, REDUCED DEMANDS ALLOW METROPOLITAN'S BOARD TO RESCIND MANDATORY RESTRICTIONS **Board declares Water Supply Alert asking for continued wise water use**

Lower demands achieved through the region's water-saving efforts and improved supply conditions, particularly in Northern California, enabled the Southland's largest imported water provider today to roll back mandatory water restrictions that were instituted last summer.

Metropolitan Water District's Board of Directors, however, voted to maintain a Water Supply Alert calling for continued awareness and reinforced conservation throughout the district's 5,200-square-mile service area.

"We join our member agencies and retailers throughout the region in thanking consumers for their continued water-saving efforts in response to the record drought. The fact is that we would not be taking this action today were it not for the public's support and diligence," said Metropolitan board Chairman Randy Record.

While Record called the board's action a welcome reprieve from the shortage conditions the region has dealt with the last few years, he warned that Southern Californians cannot become complacent about using water wisely.

"Not only will continued conservation be necessary to replenish and maintain our storage reserves, sustaining wise water use remains as essential as ever," he said. "Our long-term reliability plans revolve around the need to continue lowering demands through water use efficiencies."

Metropolitan's board action follows Gov. Jerry Brown's latest executive order Monday to permanently harden certain conservation rules and the State Water Resources Control Board's proposed changes to emergency drought rules affecting the state's retail water agencies.

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Along with the water-saving response, Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said the decision to lift mandatory restrictions was made possible by supply improvements aided by this season's storms. Although much-anticipated El Niño conditions never materialized in Southern California, the story was different in Northern California, where rain and snow in the Sierra was near normal.

As a result of the improved hydrologic conditions, Metropolitan's allocation for State Water Project supplies stands at 60 percent, more than the last three years combined. The SWP typically provides about a third of Southern California's water.

After drawing down its reserves since 2012 to meet demands, Kightlinger said the district plans to store water for the first time in four years. The district anticipates storing in the range of 400,000 acre-feet of water this year. (An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by two typical Southland households in a year.)

"We might be able to breathe a little easier since the severity of the drought has eased, but we all need to hold tight to the smart conservation practices we've adopted, like planting California Friendly™ landscaping, washing only full loads of laundry, fixing leaks, taking shorter showers and installing water-efficient devices," Kightlinger said.

In the face of unmatched drought conditions—after the driest year on record in 2013, the hottest year on record in 2014 and the lowest Sierra snowpack ever recorded in 2015—Metropolitan began restricting wholesale deliveries to its 26 member public agencies last July to help save water and stretch available supplies. The cutback amounted to a 15 percent reduction in supplies and included stiff surcharges for member agencies that exceed their allocation.

"All of our member agencies met the water-savings targets we set, which is why we are confident that lower water use will continue into the future," Kightlinger said.

In response to overwhelming public interest, Metropolitan also established the nation's largest turf removal and water conservation program. Along with local rebate programs, the total regional investment surpassed half a billion dollars.

Lifting the allocation restrictions will allow local agencies with groundwater basins to purchase replenishment water from Metropolitan. Groundwater reserves were significantly tapped over the past several years to meet demands.

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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.*