



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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PERSISTENT DROUGHT CONDITIONS COULD COMPEL METROPOLITAN TO LIMIT IMPORTED WATER SUPPLIES FOR REGION THIS SUMMER

Supply allocation could trigger mandatory rationing throughout Southland for second time in six years

Preparing for a potential fourth drought year, Southern California's wholesale water importer today outlined scenarios that could require the agency to limit deliveries and prompt mandatory rationing throughout much of the region this summer.

After a good, wet start to February following a historically dry January, a report to a committee of the Metropolitan Water District's Board of Directors laid out a range of possible water allocation actions—from zero supply restrictions to possible cutbacks of 5-10 percent or even more. The range of potential cuts are mainly based on State Water Project delivery scenarios from Northern California in 2015, although Colorado River deliveries and local supplies also are part of the equation.

Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said the board is expected to consider a possible supply allocation in April. If an allocation is enacted, Metropolitan's wholesale cutbacks would take effect July 1, he said.

"Southland consumers have responded to the water conservation challenge this past year. We all, however, need to be prepared to take water saving to another level this summer if water supply conditions don't improve," Kightlinger said.

"We're certainly hopeful the storms that swept through Northern California this weekend will help make a dent in the drought. But should state project supplies not improve substantially, it won't be a matter of if, but how much mandatory water cutbacks will be necessary to meet demands and maintain reasonable reserves," he added.

In preparation for the continuation of California's record drought, in December Metropolitan's board revised the district's region-wide, allocation plan that equitably distributes imported supply reductions among member agencies during shortages. Metropolitan last allocated supplies in 2009-11.

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The current 15 percent state project water allocation for Metropolitan and other parts of the state would yield about 280,000 acre-feet of water from Northern California, following 2014's record low 5 percent SWP allocation. (An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by two typical Southland households in a year.)

With a forecast of 930,000 acre-feet in 2015 Colorado River deliveries, Kightlinger said Metropolitan could be forced to make significant withdrawals from the Southland's remaining reserves to help meet water demands. Today, the region's reserves stand at about 1.2 million acre-feet, less than half of what Metropolitan held in storage at the end of 2012.

"This is a serious situation," Kightlinger said. "The challenge is how we balance the region's demands with the available imported supplies, while maintaining sufficient reserves in case the drought continues beyond this year."

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a 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.