



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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**HEADING INTO HOT, DRY SUMMER, METROPOLITAN RAMPS UP CONSERVATION CALL TO PRESERVE RESERVES DURING DROUGHT
The district reintroduces Internet gauge that helps track region's reserves, previews next phase of region-wide outreach, advertising campaign**

With Memorial Day weekend signaling the unofficial start of summer, leaders of Southern California's primary water import agency today ratcheted up the appeal for additional conservation to help lower demands and preserve the region's water reserves should the statewide drought carry into 2015.

Newly elected Metropolitan Water District Board Chairman Randy Record and General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger delivered the serious water-saving request while cautioning about significant withdrawals from Southland water reserves to meet demands this year, just two years after building up those storage accounts to historic high levels. The agency's imported supplies provide about half the water used in the region.

"Summer is around the corner and we are asking people in Southern California to do what they can to lower their water use during the upcoming hot months, especially cutting back on their outdoor watering where up to 60 percent of water is used," Record said.

"Consumers and businesses can make a difference this summer by taking immediate action to lower demand," he added. "Every gallon of water saved this summer is one more gallon we can keep in reserve."

Record noted recent action by Metropolitan's Board of Directors to double the incentive for turf removal as well as extend rebates for rain barrels and high-efficiency toilets to further entice Southern Californians to institute water-saving practices at home and in businesses.

To help keep consumers informed about the region's supply conditions in the midst of a statewide drought, Metropolitan announced plans to reinstate an Internet tool that tracks vital Southland water reserve levels.

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Resembling an automotive fuel meter with measurements from full to empty, Metropolitan's Water Alert gauge follows reserve levels in the region's surface water and groundwater storage accounts. The gauge was first used during the 2008-10 drought on the district's websites, mwdh2o.com and bewaterwise.com.

Metropolitan also will be rolling out a new radio and television campaign throughout the summer urging residents about the need to conserve as dry conditions are expected to continue.

"We're encouraged by the strong public response our conservation rebate and incentive programs have already received," Kightlinger said. "We prefer to use a carrot to encourage conservation rather than a stick. Saving water now can help us avoid penalties next year."

Metropolitan continues to face water supply challenges in both of its imported water sources in Northern California and the Colorado River. The Southland is receiving the smallest allocation in the 43-year history of State Water Project deliveries from Northern California after three years of drought. State deliveries, which normally account for about a third of the Southland's annual supplies, stand at only 5 percent of a full allocation.

Although snowpack in the Colorado River watershed is above average this year, the river system is recovering from 12 years of drought. Storage in the system's two huge reservoirs—Lake Mead and Lake Powell—is just above 40 percent.

To adjust to these conditions, particularly the record-low deliveries from Northern California, Kightlinger highlighted the extraordinary actions Metropolitan has taken this year, including maximizing Colorado River deliveries throughout its six-county service area and deferring maintenance so that the aqueduct system can run at nearly full capacity.

"It has been a busy spring, and we envision a very busy summer ahead," Kightlinger noted. "We already shut down two of our treatment plants on hot weekends recently to make drought-related changes to our water delivery system. And we will continue to make additional changes to our system so that we can move water from wherever we have it to where it's needed."

Kightlinger said the Southland has already started drawing heavily on its stored reserves. Metropolitan may need to withdraw upward of a million acre-feet this year to meet demands in 2014, the most the district has taken from reserves in a year. (An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount of water used annually by two typical Southland households.)

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“People will see visible differences in the levels of Southland reservoirs in coming months,” he said. “For example, Diamond Valley Lake, our largest storage reservoir located in southwest Riverside County, is being lowered to meet demand, and our supplies from the state’s Castaic Lake in Los Angeles County also will be drafted.”

Metropolitan is also calling on the region’s retail water agencies to do their part to enforce conservation measures and ordinances to bring down demands, he said.

Kightlinger cautioned that the end of the drought will not automatically mean Southern California is out of the water-supply woods. Southland supplies from Northern California will continue to be severely limited because of pumping restrictions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta due to environmental conditions impacting fisheries, he said, estimating the region has lost access to about 1.5 million acre feet since 2008.

“This is why Metropolitan remains committed to finding a solution to the water supply conflicts in the Delta, through the effort known as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan,” Kightlinger said. “We not only need rain and snow to meet our future needs, we also will need a modernized water supply system that can capture and convey that rain so we can store it for dry periods.”

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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.