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**METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT, BARD WATER DISTRICT PARTNER
FOR COLORADO RIVER SUSTAINABILITY IN CALIFORNIA
Agreement supports agricultural, urban economies**

A landmark, seven-year seasonal land fallowing agreement that will provide Colorado River water to benefit California cities and farms has been signed by the Metropolitan Water District and Bard Water District.

After completing a successful voluntary seasonal fallowing pilot program in 2016 and 2017, Metropolitan proposed a long-term seasonal fallowing agreement from 2020 through 2026. Under the agreement, Bard farmers will be paid not to grow water-intensive crops from April 1 through July 31. The water saved will be made available to Metropolitan for current urban needs or stored in Lake Mead for future use.

“The Colorado River is a lifeline to millions of people in seven states and two countries, but the reality is that there is an imbalance between supplies and demands that is being compounded by the effects of climate change,” said Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger. “This agreement is an innovative approach to preserve California agriculture while ensuring water reliability for our urban communities.”

Bard Water District is located in the southeastern corner of California bordering Yuma, Arizona. Colorado River water is diverted from the All American Canal into the Bard Water District to irrigate approximately 7,120 acres for agriculture purposes.

Steve Alameda, President of the Board for the Bard Water District, noted that agriculture plays a huge role in supporting the local economy.

“We’re proud to help promote sustainability of a precious resource – the Colorado River – while preserving the farms that are so important to our community, and to the customers they serve across California and the nation,” Alameda said.

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Metropolitan will pay \$452 per acre fallowed between April and July, up to \$1.4 million annually, with no more than 3,000 acres left idle. Of the payments made, 75 percent goes to farmers under individual agreements, while 25 percent is paid to Bard Water District for infrastructure improvements to an aging water delivery system.

The program is estimated to make up to 6,000 acre-feet of water available annually for Metropolitan's 5,200 square-mile service area, which is enough water to meet the needs of about 18,000 Southern California households for a year.

"This program will provide mutual benefits to both agencies and will demonstrate how urban-agriculture partnerships can work," said Nick Bahr, General Manager for the Bard Water District. "Our partnership with local farmers will help us make needed upgrades to our water delivery system."

This latest agreement means Metropolitan now has partnerships in place with every agricultural entity in California that uses Colorado River water. The partnership follows those with Imperial Irrigation District, Palo Verde Irrigation District, the Coachella Valley Water District and the Quechan Indian Tribe.

"Collaboration continues to be one of our greatest tools in ensuring water reliability for Southern California," said Metropolitan Chairwoman Gloria Gray. "As Colorado River water users, we face significant challenges, but we've shown time and again we can come together to develop innovative solutions such as this one. I am deeply appreciative of Bard Water District's partnership and look forward to the benefits of this collaboration."

While strengthening its imported water supplies, Metropolitan continues to reduce reliance on those sources through conservation, water storage and the development of new local supplies.

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

Bard Water District provides Colorado River water for irrigation to the Yuma Project Reservation Division, comprised of Quechan Tribal and privately deeded lands within Fort Yuma, Winterhaven, and Bard areas.