



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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METROPOLITAN SWITCHES TO SOLAR TO HELP OFFSET POWER USED FOR WATER DELIVERIES Agency cuts carbon footprint, energy costs, with start-up of 3-megawatt solar facility at La Verne treatment plant

With the dual goals of cutting carbon emissions and reducing operational costs, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California unveiled its latest investment in solar power today.

Metropolitan board Chairman Randy Record joined General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger to flip a ceremonial switch signifying the activation of two separate solar fields with 10,780 large, sun-tracking panels at the district's F.E. Weymouth Water Treatment Plant in La Verne. The 3-megawatt solar installation covering 15.5 acres will generate about 6.5 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean, renewable energy a year, offsetting nearly half of the plant's energy demands.

"As public stewards of our natural resources, Metropolitan is ever-conscious of the impact our operations have on the environment, from the delivery and treatment of water to the day-to-day operation of our facilities," Record said.

"Just as we have assumed a leadership role in promoting conservation and other water-wise activities such as recycling and groundwater cleanup, we are also working hard to reduce our carbon footprint," he said.

The two separate solar fields feature a total of 539 sun-tracking stations, each supporting a string of 20 315-watt panels. Each panel weighs nearly 60 pounds and generates up to 600 kWh of electricity a year. The stations employ a tracking system that allows the panels to follow the sun's path from east to west, producing 25 percent more power than fixed panels.

With Metropolitan sitting at the center of the water-energy nexus, Kightlinger said the district is uniquely positioned to benefit from solar power.

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“By all indications, climate change is going to challenge our mission of providing reliable water to Southern California. Longer droughts, higher temperatures and decreased snowpack await us in the years and decades to come. So it only makes sense that Metropolitan would want to be part of the climate solution,” Kightlinger said.

“Metropolitan doesn’t have much in the way of direct emissions, so to reduce our carbon footprint, we needed to look at our energy use. And while we benefit greatly from hydropower generated at our facilities, we also want to take advantage of solar opportunities,” he added.

The switch to solar will eliminate more than 1,900 tons of carbon dioxide every year, equivalent to the emissions produced by burning 2.1 million pounds of coal or powering 930 homes.

The La Verne solar project is the latest step in Metropolitan’s move toward solar. The agency already has a 1-megawatt solar plant at its Robert A. Skinner Water Treatment Plant in southwest Riverside County and a 1/2–megawatt facility at Diamond Valley Lake Visitor Center in Hemet. A fourth solar installation is expected to launch next year at the district’s Joseph Jensen Water Treatment Plant in Granada Hills.

The solar facilities not only cut carbon emissions, they also help reduce Metropolitan’s energy costs. The \$10.5 million solar plant in La Verne is expected to last 30 years and will pay for itself long before that due to the cost savings realized by replacing costly electricity purchased on the retail market with self-produced energy. Metropolitan also will receive about \$1 million in rebates from the California Solar Initiative Program for the plant.

“This is a smart investment. The retail electricity market is getting less predictable due to global resource competition and increased regulation of greenhouse gas emissions,” said Debra C. Man, Metropolitan’s assistant general manager and chief operating officer. “It makes sense for us to avoid that volatility by investing in a facility that will ultimately pay for itself. The solar plant will operate during peak-demand hours, when electricity costs are highest.”

The Weymouth plant can treat up to 520 million gallons of water every day and serves eastern Los Angeles and Orange counties. As Metropolitan’s first treatment plant, Weymouth became operational in 1941 as part of the construction of the district’s Colorado River Aqueduct. Today, Weymouth is one of the largest treatment plants in the nation.

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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.