



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

P. O. Box 54153, Los Angeles, California 90054-0153 • (213) 217-6485 • [www.mwdh2o.com](http://www.mwdh2o.com)

Contact: Bob Muir, (213) 217-6930; (213) 324-5213, mobile

Aug. 31, 2007

**METROPOLITAN BOARD TO ASSESS WATER MANAGEMENT OPTIONS IN 2008,  
AFTER JUDGE ORDERS HISTORIC REDUCTIONS IN SUPPLIES FROM DELTA  
Southern California loses up to 30 percent of its supplies  
from Delta next year and possibly longer**

The reliability of water supplies from Northern California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta was cast in doubt today, as a U.S. District Court judge set into motion one of the single largest court-ordered water curtailments in state history.

Based on initial estimates supplied by the state, the Metropolitan Water District—the primary water importer for urban Southern California—stands to lose as much as 30 percent of its supplies from Northern California next year and possibly longer, under Judge Oliver W. Wanger's preliminary ruling in Fresno.

In addressing declining populations of the endangered Delta smelt, Wanger pieced together a series of restrictions on state and federal water project operations in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, a supply source for 25 million Californians in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California. Wanger's decision, selected from remedies submitted by environmental groups as well as state and federal resource agencies, does not immediately impact Metropolitan's state supplies this year.

"California simply cannot lose important water supplies without real consequences throughout the state," said Metropolitan General Manager Jeff Kightlinger.

"This historic court decision affirms what the water community has realized for some time, but the general public may not fully appreciate—the Delta, both as a valuable ecosystem and essential water supply, is broken. This court ruling did not fix it," Kightlinger said.

Wanger's decision stemmed from a lawsuit brought by the Natural Resources Defense Council against the federal Department of the Interior, challenging operations of the State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project in the Delta. The projects—which together manage

more . . . . .

more than 40 reservoirs that can store nearly 17 million acre-feet of water—rely on pumps and aqueducts to move Northern California water supplies through the Delta.

In an earlier decision, Wanger ruled that the federal government’s “biological opinion” that guides water operations in the Delta was deficient in its protections for endangered fish, particularly the Delta smelt. Today’s ruling clarifies the interim operating rules until a new biological opinion is in place.

Wanger based his decision on recommendations filed by the state Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In remedies submitted to Wanger this summer, the respective state and federal resource agencies separately proposed a series of pumping curtailments in the winter and spring for Delta smelt, which spawn throughout the Delta in the winter and then migrate westward in the spring to Suisun Bay.

Actual water supply curtailments for Metropolitan will depend on fish, weather and flow conditions in the Delta and how curtailments are divided between the state and federal projects. In addition, actual impacts also will be contingent upon Wanger’s formal, signed ruling, a process that could take up to two months.

“Judge Wanger’s ruling only lasts for a year, until a new biological opinion is in place to guide the operation of the two water projects. But its impacts could be felt statewide for many years to come,” Kightlinger said.

“The question is whether these cutbacks will continue in the new biological opinion. Some possible short-term actions in the Delta could lessen the impact in the years ahead until a long-term solution is put in place. However, unless the Delta is fixed, these temporary cutbacks could become permanent,” he added.

Because of the mounting challenges, Metropolitan’s board is refining and strengthening its long-term Delta policies and potential actions. At the same time, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s “Delta Vision” task force is expected to make recommendations this November.

“Judge Wanger’s decision to cut back water supplies doesn’t address various other Delta problems and issues. Invasive species will continue to deplete food supplies for Delta smelt, pesticide runoff that can harm the estuary will persist, and the levee system will remain vulnerable to earthquakes and rising sea levels caused by climate change,” said Kightlinger.

more . . . . .

“The Delta needs a comprehensive solution that addresses all of its problems. Part of that solution must include new ways to isolate the impacts of water diversions from the estuary,” Kightlinger said.

###

*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving 18 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.*