



*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: Rob Hallwachs, (213) 217-6450; (213) 324-1255, mobile  
Bob Muir, (213) 217-6930; (213) 324-5213, mobile

Oct. 12, 2007

**RECORD DRY YEAR, POTENTIAL 2008 WATER SHORTAGES  
SET STAGE FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WORLD WATER FORUM  
Year-long grant competition encourages college students  
to address regional, world water issues**

With record dry conditions and possible 2008 water shortages serving as the backdrop, a year-long grant competition that will mobilize hundreds of college students throughout Southern California to help address regional and global water issues kicked off today.

Students from more than 30 community colleges and universities throughout the Southland joined officials from the Metropolitan Water District, the federal Bureau of Reclamation and UNICEF to launch the Southern California World Water Forum during a five-hour workshop at Metropolitan's headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

"This program is a great opportunity for our next generation of great young thinkers to tackle the water problems of today and to prepare for the water problems we face tomorrow," said U.S. Rep. Grace F. Napolitano (D-Norwalk), honorary chairperson of the Southern California World Water Forum, in a taped address.

"I trust your participation in this program will challenge you to get more involved in addressing water issues affecting California and the western United States, with national implications of global warming," Napolitano told students.

This year's competition gets underway as water agencies throughout Southern California plan to deal with continuing record dry conditions and potential water shortages in 2008 and beyond.

Metropolitan board Chairman Timothy F. Brick noted that the World Water Forum's principles were consistent with the district's current water conservation advertising campaign emphasizing, "It's Time to Get Serious."

more . . . . .

“In that same serious manner, we’re looking for students participating in the World Water Forum to propose ways to develop new conservation technology prototypes to save water,” Brick said. “We also looking for them to develop new approaches and policies that challenge people to think about using or allocating water differently, and to create new, innovative ways to communicate and educate people about ways to access, clean, use and save water in their everyday lives.”

The United Nations estimates that more than one billion people worldwide do not have sustainable access to safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. In response, the U.N.’s General Assembly has proclaimed 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life,” which includes a commitment by all 191 member nations to reduce by half the proportion of people unable to reach or afford safe drinking water.

“A third of the world's population lives in water-stressed countries. By 2025, this is expected to rise to two-thirds. However, there is more than enough water available, in total, to meet everyone's basic needs,” said Vanessa Tobin, deputy director of UNICEF’s water, environment and sanitation program division.

“It is recommended that people need a minimum of 40 liters of water a day for drinking, washing, cooking and sanitation, but we measure basic standards based upon providing 20 liters per day. Still, more than a billion people are lacking access to even that small amount,” Tobin said.

The Southern California World Water Forum program will award \$10,000 grants to as many as 18 college teams to research, develop and communicate water-use efficiency technology that can be employed cost-effectively in water-stressed regions, locally or internationally. Grant proposals are due to Metropolitan by Dec. 14.

Program co-sponsors include Metropolitan; federal Bureau of Reclamation; the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County; the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers; Friends of the United Nations; and Water for People.

“Meeting the needs for safe and reliable water supplies—whether on a local, regional or global scale—has always brought challenges,” said Lorri Gray, director of the Bureau’s Lower Colorado Region.

more . . . . .

“Issues such as drought and population growth will only make the challenges more difficult. Programs such as this offer a unique opportunity for state, local and federal water management entities to partner with college students to explore potential new and innovative ways of meeting those challenges,” Gray said.

Jeff Kightlinger, Metropolitan’s general manager, said the program also would help address the critical nationwide need to educate and develop a committed and skilled workforce in the engineering fields.

“Metropolitan, like other public agencies, is facing an impending need for new, young professionals trained and motivated to become involved in the water industry. Climate change, population increases and water quality, as well as environmental standards and constraints will continue to generate significant challenges for water agencies in science, engineering, policy development, planning and public outreach strategies,” Kightlinger said.

“I’m confident the World Water Forum will continue to promote the kind of creativity, debate, analysis and outreach to help us meet those serious challenges,” he added.

Benita Lynn Horn, Metropolitan’s coordinator of the Southern California Water Forum, said the interdisciplinary program will bring together students from academic applications ranging from international studies, urban planning and political science to civil engineering, economics and environmental sciences.

“To qualify, these student teams must design a rendering or prototype of a technology or process that improves water-use efficiency,” Horn said. “They also must develop a business plan that includes a budget and timeline, as well as addresses the environmental, financial, societal and public policy implications of their proposal.”

###

*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.*