



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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

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

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**METROPOLITAN BOARD AUTHORIZES AGREEMENTS LEADING TOWARD
ADOPTION OF FEDERAL COLORADO RIVER SHORTAGE-SHARING PLAN
Federal accord would safeguard California, Metropolitan
from Colorado River supply shortages, allow for additional storage**

A series of four agreements were authorized today by Metropolitan Water District's Board of Directors that will clear the way for historic federal guidelines that would, for the first time, determine how water shortages are shared along the Colorado River.

With U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne expected to sign the landmark federal conservation and reservoir operations plan for the Colorado River later this week in Las Vegas, Metropolitan's board authorized General Manager Jeff Kightlinger to finalize related documents that will facilitate the plan and would shield California from the impacts of potential water shortages. The agreement also would allow agencies to develop and store new water supplies.

"After two-and-a-half years of negotiations among the seven basin states and the federal government, this new federal plan will help California recover some of the water reliability that Mother Nature has taken away during the last eight years of record drought along the Colorado River," said Metropolitan board Chairman Timothy F. Brick.

"With this plan, Metropolitan also will be granted the opportunity to store nearly 1.5 million acre-feet of conserved water in Lake Mead. That additional storage is equivalent to building a reservoir that is nearly twice the size of Diamond Valley Lake," Brick said, referring to the district's largest reservoir near Hemet in southwest Riverside County.

The foundation of the proposed federal plan, which would be in effect through 2026, are guidelines for the Interior Department to declare shortages on the Colorado River and how shortages would be shared among the lower basin states—California, Arizona and Nevada—as Lake Mead storage levels recede.

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Under the federal accord, Arizona and Nevada would first realize the initial stepped shortages based on how far Lake Mead storage levels drop. The plan also calls for storage levels in Lake Mead and Powell to be coordinated to manage water more efficiently and lessen the risk of shortages to states in the upper and lower Colorado River basins.

“One of the most creative elements of the Colorado River plan would allow Metropolitan to store in Lake Mead up to 400,000 acre-feet of water produced a year through system efficiency projects for future use,” Kightlinger said. “That water would be generated through our existing conservation programs with the Imperial Irrigation District and the Palo Verde Irrigation District as well as through potential desalination projects.”

In advance of the federal agreement, Metropolitan partnered with the Bureau of Reclamation in a demonstration project that stored 50,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead during 2006. Metropolitan plans to recover the stored supplies in 2008 to address the state’s continuing dry conditions. An acre-foot is nearly 326,000 gallons of water, about the amount used by two typical Southern California families in and around their homes in a year.

Along with supplies from Northern California deliveries through the State Water Project, the Colorado River is a primary water source for urban Southern California, serving as the backbone of Metropolitan’s supplies for more than 65 years.

Agreements authorized by Metropolitan’s board today would preclude other agencies in the lower basin from claiming water conserved and stored in Lake Mead by another state, and would guarantee delivery of the developed supplies.

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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.