

# WATER

*(Updated January 2002)*

POLICY: ENSURE A SAFE, SUFFICIENT AND RELIABLE SUPPLY OF WATER TO MEET THE EXISTING AND FUTURE WATER NEEDS OF THE SAN DIEGO REGION

## **Introduction**

The San Diego region's economic wellbeing and quality of life depends upon securing a reliable supply of water to meet the existing and future water needs of the region. Since the 1940's, following formation of the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA), the San Diego region has relied upon water imported from outside the county due to limited local surface and groundwater supplies. Currently, 70 to 95 percent of the region's water supply is imported from the Colorado River and northern California. The CWA is a government agency comprised of cities, irrigation districts, municipal water districts, county water districts and the Pendleton Military Reservation, which is obliged by statute to provide its member agencies with adequate supplies of water to meet the increasing and expanding water needs within their respective boundaries.

The CWA and its 23 member agencies supply water to approximately 97% of San Diego County's population. With the exception of the City of Coronado, which relies upon local water via the City of San Diego, all San Diego County cities are served by the CWA. The area outside CWA's service area, but within San Diego County, is primarily rural lands and relies upon local supplies.

The CWA currently relies upon the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) for imported water supplies. However, it is actively pursuing other imported water sources, including implementation of a historic agreement for the transfer of conserved water from the Imperial Irrigation District, to diversify its imported water supplies. In addition, the CWA and its member agencies have planned and are pursuing water conservation programs, water recycling, groundwater, seawater desalination, and emergency surface storage locally within the county. The CWA's present diversification program can be traced to the severe drought of 1987-92 when the San Diego region faced drastic cut backs in its imported water deliveries from MWD. In response to MWD actions the CWA developed a comprehensive plan to increase reliability and diversify supplies. This plan has been updated several times since the 1987-92 drought and is presently summarized in the CWA's 2000 Urban Water Management Plan.

In 1992, the CWA and SANDAG entered in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which details how the two regional agencies coordinate in order to ensure the availability of water for future growth. Under the MOA, the CWA agrees to use SANDAG's most recent regional growth forecasts for regional water supply planning purposes, provide updated information on changes in plans or programs, and implement relevant actions contained in the water element of the Regional Growth Management Strategy. The MOA ensures that the water demand projections for the San Diego region are linked with SANDAG's growth forecasts and that water supply is a component of the overall growth management strategy.

## Quality of Life Standards and Objectives

The objectives for water supply are set locally, primarily by the CWA, based in part on decisions made by MWD, CWA member agencies, and other agencies such as the wastewater treatment agencies that produce recycled water. In addition, the objectives are based on the most recent regional growth forecasts in use by SANDAG.

The supply of water depends on three components: water resources, infrastructure (pipelines, pumps and reservoirs) and demand management (water conservation). Achieving the following objectives would ensure a sufficient water supply to meet existing and future needs of the San Diego region.

1. A safe and reliable supply of water should be provided to serve existing and future residents, businesses, institutions and agricultural uses in the region.
2. The CWA and its member agencies should fully implement the existing and proposed Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are included in the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Urban Water Conservation in California to obtain a conservation savings of approximately 93,000 acre-feet by 2020.
3. Local and regional water projects such as recycling, groundwater usage and seawater desalination should be pursued to achieve a goal of producing close to 140,000 acre-feet by 2020 within the CWA service area. The objective is to develop these supplies in five-year increments as follows: 64,000 acre-feet by 2005, 98,000 acre-feet by 2010, 109,000 acre-feet by 2015, and 138,000 acre-feet by 2020.
4. Evaluate other local supply options to determine whether these supplies are cost-effective and reliable sources of supply for the region.
5. Implement the 1998 CWA-Imperial Irrigation District (IID) Water Conservation and Transfer Agreement for the long-term transfer of conserved Colorado River water to San Diego County. Under the CWA-IID Agreement, Colorado River water will be conserved by Imperial Valley farmers, who voluntarily participate in the program, and then transferred to the CWA for use in San Diego County. Deliveries into San Diego County from the transfer are expected to begin by 2003. The CWA will receive between 130,000 and 200,000 acre-feet per year after an initial 10-year ramp-up in the water deliveries.
6. Seek clarification regarding the amount of water the CWA can legally depend upon from the MWD. As calculated by MWD, the CWA has a preferential right to less than 15% of Metropolitan's water, but on average purchases an estimated 25% of Metropolitan's supplies.
7. Continue implementation of the CWA's Capital Improvement Program that is designed to:
  - 1) increase reliability and operational flexibility of the region's aqueduct system, 2) increase the capacity of the region's aqueduct system, and 3) provide the region with adequate emergency storage needs.

## Recommended Actions

To achieve the water supply objectives, the following actions will need to be taken by SANDAG, local jurisdictions, the CWA, its member agencies and water users, such as residents, businesses, institutions, and agriculture.

1. To plan for a safe and reliable supply, the CWA and its member agencies should review and update, as appropriate, their Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) in accordance with the California State Water Code. Implementation of the UWMPs should be coordinated for the benefit of the entire region.
2. SANDAG and CWA should pursue a legislative program that follows and takes positions on bills consistent with the quality of life standards and objectives and recommended actions for water availability.
3. Continue implementation of the existing and proposed BMPs to obtain the water conservation savings objective. One opportunity for future conservation savings is adoption of higher water conservation standards for commercial coin operated washing machines.
4. The CWA should continue to provide loans for studies of potential local supply projects through the Financial Assistance Program and grant funding for implementation of water recycling projects through the Reclaimed Water Development Fund.
5. The CWA, its member agencies and other local agencies should continue to pursue funding through existing and future federal, state and regional programs for development of local projects. The existing programs include, but are not limited to, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI Grant Program, California Proposition 13 Funding, and MWD Local Resources Program and Seawater Desalination Funding Program.
6. The contingencies associated with implementation of the CWA-IID Water Transfer Agreement must be resolved by 2002 in order to allow deliveries to begin in 2003. One of the primary items is successful completion of the environmental documents associated with the transfer. State and federal legislation will be pursued to allow expeditious obtainment of the necessary environmental compliance.
7. The CWA adopted Seawater Desalination Action Plan should be completed with the goal of developing at least 25,000 acre-feet of supply provided it is determined to be cost-effective and feasible by 2020. The Action Plan calls for a comprehensive evaluation of the potential for development of seawater desalination within San Diego County. The plan consists of examining partnership opportunities with the city of Carlsbad for implementation of a potential seawater desalination facility adjacent to the Encina Power Plant in Carlsbad; initiating discussions with interested parties on seawater desalination opportunities near the South Bay Power Plant in Chula Vista; and conducting a study of other potential locations where seawater desalination facilities could be developed on a regional scale.

8. Local jurisdictions should review, update and adopt, as appropriate, regulations that would require water conservation mechanisms such as separate irrigation meters for commercial and large residential common-use areas to better manage landscape water use, installation of high efficiency dishwashers and coin-operated clothes washers in commercial businesses, and encourage the use of recycled water when this supply is available and meets all regulatory requirements.
9. The CWA should continue their efforts to clarify current application and legality of MWD preferential rights under the MWD Act.
10. The regional Emergency Storage Project (ESP) should be fully implemented by 2010, which is the expected completion date. The CWA in partnership with the Olivenhain Municipal Water District has initiated construction of the Olivenhain Reservoir, which is the first phase of the ESP. The ESP is a regional project with a system of reservoirs, pipelines and other facilities that will provide water to the county during prolonged interruption of imported water due to earthquake, drought or other disaster.
11. Following MWD's adoption of a shortage allocation formula as part of its Water Surplus and Drought Management Plan, the CWA and its member agencies, as soon as practicable, should review and adopt, as appropriate, drought allocation plans to cope with potential future shortages within the region.
12. Complete the Regional Water Facilities Master Plan, which identifies what regional water facilities will be needed to serve San Diego County through 2030. Facilities identified through this planning process may become part of the Capital Improvement Program when it is updated to extend beyond 2010.