



San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123

News Release

Media Contacts:

John Liarakos
(858) 522-6703 Office
(858) 761-2544 Cell
Or
Denise Vedder
(858) 522-6709 Office
(619) 770-8403 Cell

April 28, 2011

Water Authority Ends Shortage Allocations, Lifts Call for Mandatory Use Restrictions

Agency urges continued water efficiency, focus on fixing supply and ecological problems in Bay-Delta

Significant improvements in this year's weather and water storage led the San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors today to end mandatory urban and agricultural water supply cutbacks, and to lift the agency's regionwide call for mandatory water use restrictions.

The board also reinforced the need for the region to continue to use water wisely, and called upon the state of California to finalize a financially viable plan to solve significant problems plaguing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta, the hub of California's State Water Project system.

"While our latest drought is over, our state's water supply system is still in crisis," said Water Authority Board Chair Michael T. Hogan. "Thanks to a very wet year and outstanding water-saving efforts by our region's residents, businesses and agricultural community, we can put our drought response tools back in the toolbox – for now. But we cannot forget that ensuring

Water Authority Ends Shortage Allocations, Lifts Call for Mandatory Use Restrictions

Page 2 of 4

a safe and reliable water supply is a long-term challenge here in semi-arid Southern California. We must solve the water supply and ecological problems in the Bay-Delta that led to cuts in water deliveries from State Water Project and contributed to our recent supply shortages.”

Effective April 29, the Water Authority will restore full urban water deliveries to its 24 member retail water agencies, which had been required to comply with a regional 8 percent supply cut since July 2009. The board action also restores full agricultural water deliveries by the Water Authority, which had been cut 13 percent for some agricultural customers since July 2009.

The Board action deactivated the Water Authority’s Water Shortage and Drought Response Plan and ended the drought response levels in its Drought Response Conservation Program Ordinance. The region had been in a Level 2 Drought Alert condition, which signaled local water agencies to enact conservation-based rates or mandatory water use restrictions to help curb demand.

In taking the action to end supply cutbacks and mandatory water use restrictions, the board reinforced the importance for residents and businesses to continue efficient water use practices in the face ongoing supply challenges and the long-term achievement of a state-mandated 20 percent reduction in water use by 2020.

“Wise water use is our civic responsibility,” Hogan said. “We need to do this to keep as much water in storage as possible to help us withstand future dry spells. We also must continue our region’s long-term water supply diversification strategy to improve water supply reliability so we can withstand future supply shortages from any one source.”

The Water Authority originally approved urban shortage allocations and mandatory water use restrictions in April 2009. This came after the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – the Water Authority’s largest supplier – cut water deliveries to its member agencies

Water Authority Ends Shortage Allocations, Lifts Call for Mandatory Use Restrictions

Page 3 of 4

in response to supply challenges created by dry conditions and regulatory restrictions on water deliveries from the State Water Project.

MWD's cut to the San Diego region was 13 percent. The Water Authority was able to reduce that cut to 8 percent through supply diversification efforts. These included Colorado River water supplies it independently secured through its conservation and transfer agreement with the Imperial Irrigation District and two water-saving canal-lining projects. Supply investments made by its 24 member agencies also helped offset the MWD cuts.

Some local farmers saw their first cut to agricultural water supplies in January 2008, when MWD cut deliveries to customers participating in its agricultural water program. These customers committed to be the region's first line of defense by agreeing to take earlier – and larger – water supply cuts than urban water customers in exchange for paying a reduced rate on agricultural water.

Statewide, supply conditions have improved significantly in 2011. California snowpack conditions were nearly 80 percent above normal as of April 24, and the state Department of Water Resources recently announced the State Water Project will make 80 percent of its requested deliveries this year – up from 50 percent last year, 40 percent in 2009 and 35 percent in 2008. Many key storage reservoirs around the state are nearing their capacity. Governor Jerry Brown ended California's drought declaration on March 30, and MWD ended its supply allocations on April 13.

Agricultural and urban water use in the San Diego region also has fallen significantly. Agricultural water deliveries have decreased more than 50 percent compared to four years ago, and urban water use is down approximately 20 percent over the same period. Water Authority staff estimate improved supply conditions and reduced water use projections have reached a point where supply shortages are unlikely for at least two years.

Water Authority Ends Shortage Allocations, Lifts Call for Mandatory Use Restrictions

Page 4 of 4

The Water Authority, also as part of its actions today, resolved that despite improved hydrological conditions, California's water supply remains in crisis because of the ecological collapse and water delivery problems that continue to persist in the Bay-Delta in Northern California. The board called upon the state of California to finalize a plan for achieving the co-equal goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability in the Bay-Delta, including a viable financing plan to achieve those co-equal goals.

Until several years ago, the Bay-Delta had been the source of about 30 percent of the San Diego region's water supply. Since then, regulatory restrictions have been put in place to protect threatened fish species, and these restrictions have reduced water deliveries from the Bay-Delta. While the effects of the restrictions have been offset this year because of improved river flows and judicial orders temporarily easing some measures, there is still no long-term plan in place to settle the ongoing water reliability and environmental issues in the region.

A proposed plan to achieve the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration, the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan, is currently under development by a variety of federal, state and local agencies and organizations. A public draft of the plan and draft environmental impact reports and statements are expected to be released later this year.

More details on the Water Authority Board action can be found at [Monthly Board Meeting | San Diego County Water Authority](#), and clicking on the April 28 board agenda. The action is under the Water Planning Committee meeting.

###

The San Diego County Water Authority is a public agency serving the San Diego region as a wholesale supplier of water from the Colorado River and Northern California. The Water Authority works through its 24 member agencies to provide a safe, reliable water supply to support the region's \$186 billion economy and the quality of life of 3.1 million residents.