



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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June 10, 2008

**METROPOLITAN BOARD DECLARES WATER SUPPLY ALERT
THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TO HELP SUSTAIN RESERVES
In wake of Gov. Schwarzenegger's drought proclamation, MWD board asks
local water agencies, retailers to adopt, enforce water-saving ordinances, restrictions**

Less than a week after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed a drought statewide, Metropolitan Water District's Board of Directors today ramped up the water conservation call throughout its six-county service area by declaring a Water Supply Alert in Southern California.

To help preserve the region's water storage reserves, Metropolitan's board urged cities, counties, local public water agencies and retailers to achieve extraordinary conservation by adopting and enforcing drought ordinances, accelerating public outreach and messaging, and developing additional local supplies.

"In declaring this Water Supply Alert, we are confident that consumers and businesses throughout the Southland will take additional steps to reduce water use and eliminate waste," said Metropolitan board Chairman Timothy F. Brick.

"In the past, residents have responded to a call for action. We are depending on their help again to stave off the need to allocate supplies in the future," Brick said.

Metropolitan General Manager Jeff Kightlinger said the board's acceleration of the regional water-saving call is aimed at increasing awareness of the Southland's critical supply conditions and the immediate need for conservation. Metropolitan's main sources of imported supplies are facing unprecedented challenges because of record dry conditions for eight of the last nine years along the Colorado River and deteriorating environmental conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, he noted.

Since 2003, Metropolitan's Colorado River supplies have been diminished by as much as half after California reduced its use of river water because of drought. The district's State Water Project supplies from Northern California have been cut by nearly 30 percent this year because of dry conditions and court-ordered pumping restrictions in the Delta to protect endangered fish.

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To meet current water demands, Metropolitan and its member agencies are withdrawing supplies from surface and groundwater storage, leaving the region's reserves vulnerable to continued low-levels of imported water and emergencies, such as a major earthquake. Over the past two years, Metropolitan has drawn down its stored dry-year reserves by nearly half.

"This is a serious situation," Kightlinger said. "The need for conservation is very real, particularly with the governor's drought announcement last Wednesday. Now that the drought is official, consumers need to realize that water rationing looms should voluntary water-saving efforts not prove enough, particularly if we faced shortages that compelled our board to implement the district's recently adopted supply allocation plan.

"But just as real as the drought is, so too are the possibilities we can avoid rationing. We have all the tools for reducing water use. Now we have more incentive," Kightlinger said.

While several cities and water agencies in Southern California are already implementing local drought ordinances, Metropolitan's Water Supply Alert resolution encourages the remaining entities to institute or develop as soon as possible their own ordinances and restrictions.

Measures that could be incorporated into local drought ordinances include restrictions on the hours of watering outdoors, where up to 70 percent of water is used; prohibitions on landscape irrigation runoff; tiered rate structures that promote conservation; provisions for water-efficient landscapes in new construction and landscape retrofits; and hotlines and other mechanisms for the public to report wasteful water practices.

If the call for immediate conservation successfully motivates residents and businesses to save water, Metropolitan estimates the demand for imported supplies could reduce by about 200,000 acre-feet of water over the next 12 months. (An acre-foot is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by two typical Southland families in and around their homes in a year.)

"There are so many small things we can all do that collectively could save the region the needed water that can help us withstand this round of shortages," Brick said. "A good place to look for water-saving tips and rebates is our Web site, **bewaterwise.com**, which has become a leading destination for conservation information."

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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.