METROPOLITAN LOOKS TO DEVELOP MORE LOCAL WATER SOURCES TO HELP MEET SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA’S FUTURE SUPPLY NEEDS

MWD board also refines conservation incentives, adding rebates for rain barrels, soil moisture sensors and water-saving upgrades at fitness centers

Funding for 16 projects designed to clear a path for increased recycled water, storm water capture, desalted ocean water and recovered groundwater to meet future Southern California’s supply needs was approved today by Metropolitan Water District’s Board of Directors.

Metropolitan’s board authorized a groundbreaking series of advanced technical studies and pilot projects aimed at reducing barriers and regulatory hurdles for potential leading-edge supply resources that could be developed over the next 25 years as part of the district’s long-term water plan.

In addition, the board approved new conservation initiatives to further enhance water use efficiency throughout Southern California. Among the new initiatives are rebates for rain barrels and soil moisture sensor systems as well as financial incentives for retrofitting fitness centers with high-efficiency toilets and urinals.

“These projects complement, and do not compete with, our ongoing efforts to stabilize our imported supplies from Northern California and the Colorado River,” said Metropolitan board Vice Chair David D. De Jesus, who also chairs the board’s Water Planning and Stewardship Committee.

“We will need every water management tool to address variations in climate patterns that can dramatically affect water availability. How the region adjusts and adapts to this challenge is critical to maintaining a dependable, high-quality water supply.

“Today’s actions are an important step toward understanding and reducing the obstacles that impede the development of future local water supplies,” De Jesus said. “They also expand the list of water-saving devices available to Southland consumers and businesses with an eye on meeting the statewide goal of lowering residential per-capita water use 20 percent by the year 2020.”

Among the authorized projects proposed by 14 participating Metropolitan member public agencies, six involve groundwater clean-up and six further use of recycled water. Two address seawater desalination and two others advance storm water capture.
The projects are part of Metropolitan’s Integrated Resources Plan, the district’s long-term water strategy for maintaining regional supply reliability over the next 25 years in the face of climate change, droughts and continued growth. The updated 2010 IRP calls for Metropolitan to seek out low-risk, cost-effective, preliminary actions—including feasibility studies, research and regulatory review—that will provide the foundation to develop needed alternative resources.

Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said the district’s ability to encourage “out-of-the-box” thinking and planning is critical to developing additional local water resources.

“We have reached an era of limits on the amount of water we can import from Northern California and the Colorado River, so we must explore any and all options to maximize local resources,” Kightlinger said. The next generation of water resources will be developed locally to add to the 1.2 billion gallons of water produced in our region each day through water efficiencies, recycling and groundwater clean-up projects.”

In response to a request for proposals in May for a two-year pilot program, Metropolitan received 23 submissions for up to $500,000 each in funding from 17 different member agencies. The board’s action approved funding for 16 of these projects for a total of $3.3 million, which will be supplemented by additional funding.

As part of Metropolitan’s regular update of the district’s water conservation programs offered in cooperation with its member agencies, residential rain barrels will be eligible for a $75 rebate, beginning Oct. 1, along with an $80 incentive for home soil sensor systems. Rebates for commercial soil sensors will be offered at $25 per station. A new incentive of $10 per pair of plumb flow control valves installed in commercial properties also will be available in October.

For the first time, Metropolitan will target a specific business use by offering fitness centers incentives to install high-efficiency toilets and WaterSense®-labeled urinals. Fitness centers have a higher volume of water use than other commercial buildings resulting in greater savings.

Metropolitan also will tap the anticipated high water-savings potential of large public agency landscape areas. A short-term program will offer public agencies an up-front incentive of $300 per acre-foot for installing water-efficient landscape irrigation devices, including weather-based or central irrigation controllers and large rotary nozzles. (An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used in and around two typical Southland households in a year.)

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 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.