

# Securing Colorado River Supplies: An Urban-Agriculture Partnership in the Palo Verde Valley



A long-standing partnership with the Palo Verde Irrigation District boosts water supplies for cities across Southern California and supports an agricultural economy in the Palo Verde Valley. As part of this landmark land following program, farmers are paid to refrain from irrigating between 7 and 28 percent of the valley's land at Metropolitan's call, making water available for the communities Metropolitan serves. This 35-year agreement, which began in 2005, is a critical component of Metropolitan's commitment to finding innovative ways to expand its water resource portfolio and promote the reliability of Colorado River supplies as a source for Southern California.



Up to  
**28%**

Percentage of land  
fallowed annually by Palo  
Verde Valley farmers

## Supplying Water to Urban Southern California

The voluntary shift of water supplies, like that featured in this program, is fundamental to increasing the flexibility Metropolitan needs to provide reliable water supplies to its 26 member agencies, which serve water to nearly 19 million people in Southern California.

Up to  
**38 billion  
gallons**

Water provided for  
Southern California cities  
annually by the PVID  
fallowing program

## Supporting the Palo Verde Valley Economy

This program infuses money into the Palo Verde Valley economy. Payments to farmers provide stable income that can be used on farm-related investments, purchases and debt repayment. Metropolitan also has established a \$6 million Community Improvement Fund that is managed and administered by the local citizens to support community improvement programs, small business development and workforce training in the Palo Verde Valley.

### Between 2005 and 2017, the Metropolitan-PVID Partnership Yielded:

- **\$162.7 million** in payments to participating landowners
- **1.3 million acre-feet** in water savings made available to urban Southern California

### The \$6 Million Community Improvement Fund Supported:

- **Creation of 134 jobs and retention of 127 jobs**, according to a 2014 study
- The award of 37 public benefit grants totaling **\$1.4 million**, as of June 2018

## Preserving Southern California Agriculture

Agriculture is the heart of economic activity in the Palo Verde Valley. Preserving this farming identity is a key priority of this partnership. For this reason, Metropolitan has set limits on the amount of farmland and duration that farmland can be taken out of production. Fallowed land is maintained in accordance with approved soil and water management plans, and rotated every one to five years.

**91,400 Acres:** Average PVID farmland in production

**25,947 Acres:** Maximum farmland enrolled in fallowing program

## Palo Verde Valley Farming Leases

Metropolitan owns about 22,000 acres of irrigable farmland in the Palo Verde Valley. As a landowner in the region, Metropolitan also participates in the fallowing program. Metropolitan leases land to farmers, who when not fallowing, are incentivized to reduce their water use by growing less crops.

Lease Program Goals:

- Decrease crop consumptive water use
- Maintain a vibrant agricultural economy
- Advance state-of-the-art, water-efficient farming
- Provide positive lease revenue
- Keep administrative costs low

## Study: Land Fallowing Boosts Soil Quality

A 2014 study from the University of Arizona has found that the PVID-Metropolitan land fallowing program increased soil quality and crop production for participating growers.

"Local growers and land managers agree, stating that fields have shown a positive response after just a few years of fallowing," according to the study.



## Preserving Water, Promoting Reliability

This partnership is one of several water management programs Metropolitan has implemented to augment and secure the Southland's Colorado River supplies. Beginning in 2008, Metropolitan was allowed to store conserved water in Lake Mead for future use. As of 2017, Metropolitan has stored about 870,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead that was generated in part by water conserved under the PVID Fallowing program. Metropolitan continues to explore innovative water management and efficiency strategies to conserve agricultural water on farmlands in PVID.

For more information about the PVID Fallowing program, contact Program Manager Michael Yu at **(213) 217-6814** or at **myu@mwdh2o.com**.

## WHO IS METROPOLITAN

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative of 26 member agencies—cities and public water agencies—that serve about 19 million people in six counties. Metropolitan 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.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

### The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

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