



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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METROPOLITAN STATEMENT ON COLORADO RIVER RESERVOIR CONDITIONS

Jeffrey Kightlinger, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, issues the following statement on the Bureau of Reclamation's latest 24-month study on Colorado River system reservoir conditions.

“The past 10 years of Colorado River runoff have been the driest in the river’s history, exacerbating a drought that spans more than two decades. Despite these conditions, we’ve been able to avoid shortages by working with our partners throughout the Lower Basin states to reduce water deliveries from Lake Mead. Over the last decade, our collective conservation and storage programs have added nearly 50 feet to water levels in the reservoir. Unfortunately, it appears that continued hot and dry conditions throughout the Basin mean a shortage declaration can no longer be avoided. While Metropolitan’s supplies are not reduced in a tier 1 shortage, if Lake Mead’s level continues to drop, we are prepared to make our required contributions.

“Until then, we’re being careful about how much of our stored water we draw from Lake Mead, even as we face drought conditions at home as well. Because of critically dry conditions in California’s Sierra Nevada – Metropolitan’s other source of imported supplies – we’re relying more heavily on the Colorado River this year. But that reliance has not come at the expense of Lake Mead. Instead, we’ve been able to fill the Colorado River Aqueduct thanks to our partnerships forged with agricultural agencies along the river. The water saved through our programs funding partial land fallowing, crop rotation and irrigation improvements is either diverted in the year that it is needed or stored in Lake Mead for years like this one. These valued partnerships help us manage through the challenge of critically dry conditions on both of our imported water sources.

“Our partnerships across the Basin will be even more critical as we look ahead. The conditions we’re seeing this year highlight the threat of climate change and the drying trend we’re seeing on the river. We must continue to work collaboratively as we begin longer-term discussions on how to address the river’s supply imbalance.”

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative that, along with its 26 cities and retail suppliers, provide water for 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.