



Fact Sheet: Securing Colorado River Supplies —

# An Urban-Agriculture Partnership with Bard Water District



Building on their successful seasonal fallowing pilot program, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Bard Water District developed a long-term partnership to boost water supplies for Southland cities and support Bard's agricultural economy. Under a seven-year agreement through 2026, participating farmers avoid planting lower-value, water-intensive crops during the spring and summer in exchange for financial incentives, while in the winter and fall they continue to plant higher-value crops, such as vegetables and lettuce varieties. The conserved water is then made available to Metropolitan for use in its service area, or to store in Lake Mead for future use. As part of the agreement, 25 percent of Metropolitan's payments fund improvements to Bard's water infrastructure.

## Partner: Bard Water District

Bard is a unit of the Yuma Project, created by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and receives water via the All-American Canal. Through the seasonal fallowing program, Metropolitan diverts the water saved into its Colorado River Aqueduct at Lake Havasu, about 153 river miles upstream from Bard.



### About Metropolitan

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative of 26 member agencies – cities and public water agencies – that serve 19 million people in six counties. Metropolitan imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies and helps its members develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource management programs.

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## A Long-Term Partnership

The program offers Metropolitan an innovative, flexible and affordable water supply. At the same time, the program supports the local economy by providing a stable source of income for farmers and funding system improvements for Bard. Although participating farmers are paid to use less water, Bard retains all water rights.

### Mutual Benefits

**3,000\***

acres of farmland seasonally fallowed

UP TO **6,000\***

acre-feet of water made available for urban use

**\$1.4 million\***

maximum payments to Bard farmers

\*Annual totals

## Different Seasons, Different Crop Values

Desert agriculture realizes a market advantage in the winter for high-value vegetables such as lettuce and broccoli. In the hot summer, farmers typically grow lower-value, water-intensive commodities such as grains and grasses. By fallowing a portion of their land during hotter months, Bard farmers earn financial incentives in exchange for entering into fallowing agreements for conserved water.



Broccoli is a higher-value winter crop



Sudan grass is a water-intensive summer crop

## Metropolitan and the Colorado River: Progress Through Collaboration

Drought conditions and climate change are exacerbating what is already an imbalance between supplies and demands in the Colorado River Basin. The seasonal land fallowing program exemplifies Metropolitan's commitment to finding new and workable ways to maintain agricultural productivity while providing reliable supplies to the Southland economy. With the Bard agreement, Metropolitan has now developed partnerships with all agricultural entities in California that use Colorado River water.

### More information about the Metropolitan-Bard Seasonal Land Fallowing Program:

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Metropolitan continues to develop partnerships and programs within California and throughout the Colorado River Basin to ensure water supply reliability.



Voluntary land fallowing with the Palo Verde Irrigation District



Funding water conservation projects in the Imperial Irrigation District



Storing water in Lake Mead for future use



Incentivizing lower water use with the Quechan Tribe