



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

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## METROPOLITAN DECLARES DROUGHT EMERGENCY **Metropolitan Board of Directors calls for increased conservation in some areas and expands water-efficiency programs**

With record dry conditions straining Southern California’s water supplies, Metropolitan Water District’s Board of Directors today [declared a Drought Emergency](#) and called for increased efforts to maximize conservation, especially in communities facing the greatest challenges.

The declaration comes as California grapples with unprecedented conditions on state water resources. Water years 2020 and 2021 were the driest two-year sequence on record for precipitation in the state. And in August, Lake Oroville – the main reservoir on the State Water Project – reached its lowest point ever since being filled in the 1970s.

As part of today’s emergency declaration, Metropolitan’s board called on its member agencies dependent on state project water to use increased conservation measures or other means to reduce their use of these limited supplies.

To help the region save water, the board also approved a series of measures to expand various rebate and water-efficiency programs.

“We need immediate action to preserve and stretch our limited State Water Project supplies,” board Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray said. “Southern California on average gets about one-third of its water from Northern California via the state project. Next year, we’ll be lucky to get a small fraction of that.”

The California Department of Water Resources has indicated its initial SWP allocation next month will be zero. And if drought conditions continue, the state could do something it has never done before – provide only enough water as deemed necessary to protect the health and safety of Californians. Under this never-before-used provision of the SWP contract, the state has indicated it would constrain water deliveries to a level that may prevent any outdoor watering.

“We’re reaching uncharted territory here and we need all Southern Californians to be part of the solution,” Metropolitan General Manager Adel Hagekhalil said. “We need everyone to take action to reduce their water use immediately. This drought emergency declaration helps us all move in the same direction.”

While the region's SWP supplies are particularly stressed this year, much of Southern California can turn to the Colorado River, local supplies and Metropolitan's stored water in the Colorado River system. This year, Metropolitan has taken extraordinary actions to preserve SWP supplies by instead delivering Colorado River water to as much of the region as possible. Metropolitan has rehabilitated the Greg Avenue Pump station, allowing Colorado River water to be pumped further west than it ever has before, into the San Fernando Valley and Southern Ventura County. Metropolitan member agencies, including Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Three Valley Municipal Water District and West Basin Municipal Water District, have [agreed to take deliveries](#) of Metropolitan's treated Colorado River water, rather than the untreated water from the State Water Project they would normally receive. Metropolitan is negotiating similar arrangements with other member agencies.

Still, some areas of Southern California remain dependent on SWP supplies, including some communities in Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties served by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Calleguas Municipal Water District, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, Three Valleys Municipal Water District, and Inland Empire Utilities Agency.

"Our Colorado River supplies are finite as well – there is a drought on that system, too – so we need everyone to use water wisely. But the urgency now is on the State Water Project. That's why we're calling for increased conservation in those dependent areas," Gray said.

Today's declaration marks the latest in a series of actions Metropolitan has taken to ramp up conservation in the Southern California. In August, Metropolitan's board [declared a Water Supply Alert](#) for the region, calling for consumers and businesses to voluntarily reduce their water use and help preserve the region's storage reserves. Some of Metropolitan's member agency have already gone a step further by implementing new mandatory conservation measures or maintaining past ones.

Under the [expanded conservation programs](#) approved today, Metropolitan will provide an additional \$5.5 million to install high-efficiency toilets in older apartment buildings; increase its turf replacement program rebate from \$2 to \$3 a square foot for public agencies that replace grass with more water-efficient landscaping; and provide an additional \$1.5 million for its program to directly install water-efficient devices for income-qualified customers. In addition, the board approved a new [\\$2.6 million grant program](#) to help public agencies detect and repair leaks in their distribution systems.

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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.*