



San Diego County  
Water Authority

# Regional Water Facilities Master Plan

AN OVERVIEW

## FACT SHEET

**The Water Authority is a public agency serving the San Diego region as a wholesale supplier of water. The Water Authority works through its 23 member agencies to provide a safe, reliable water supply to support the region's \$130 billion economy and the quality of life of 3 million residents.**



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## A Safe and Reliable Water Supply

The San Diego County Water Authority is responsible for ensuring a safe and reliable water supply to support the region's \$130 billion economy and the quality of life for 3 million residents. Because of the county's arid climate and limited local water supplies, the Water Authority provides up to 90 percent of the water used in the region, importing from a single supplier: the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Most of this water is obtained from the Colorado River and Northern California through a massive system of pipes and aqueducts.

The Water Authority has determined that the best way to ensure a reliable water supply for the future is to diversify its water supply portfolio. This should include water that originates locally, such as recycled water and desalinated seawater.

The Water Authority's Regional Water Facilities Master Plan serves as the roadmap for identifying a diverse mix of water supply sources and implementing the associated facilities and projects needed through 2030 to ensure a safe and reliable supply.

## Reducing the Need for Imported Water

Southern California has been using more than its share of Colorado River water for decades because states upstream have not been using all the water to which they are entitled. Today, however, those states do need the water. This means California has to learn to live within its allotment and use less imported water.

In addition, because water is needed in the San Francisco-Sacramento Bay Delta to address that waterway's environmental issues, the San Diego region cannot rely on additional water from Northern California to meet its future needs. It is clear that the county needs more water sources to lessen its dependence upon imported water.

## Planning for the Future

The Water Authority's extensive regional water delivery system provides water for 97 percent of San Diego County residents. Nearly 300 miles of large-diameter pipelines in two major aqueducts throughout the county deliver water to the Water Authority's 23 member agencies. In addition, a newly constructed dam and reservoir store water for emergency needs.

To ensure this regional aqueduct system will deliver sufficient water to meet the growing needs of the county into the future, the Water Authority must plan now for maintenance, system improvements and new facilities.

## Purpose of the Master Plan

The Regional Water Facilities Master Plan is a long-term plan to meet San Diego County's future water demands. It focuses on diversifying the region's water supply and identifies new water sources and facilities that will be required to meet the region's water needs through 2030. The plan also calls for increased water conservation and water recycling, as well as further development of local groundwater. These local supplies are vital elements of the region's future water supply portfolio.

As a long-term program of proposed projects, the master plan does not authorize the construction of any individual project. Each project must undergo its own environmental review before construction can begin.

The Regional Water Facilities Master Plan is intended to be a flexible planning tool that can adapt to future changes in water demand and water supply circumstances. Projects within the master plan will be implemented only when the Water Authority's board of directors confirms that they are needed.

### Three Water Supply Alternatives

The Regional Water Facilities Master Plan analyzes future water demands and different ways to meet those demands. It describes three different water supply alternatives:

**Northern Alternative** — Construction of a new, sixth pipeline in the northern half of San Diego County to convey additional water from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

**Western Alternative** — Development of an additional water supply from the west through construction of seawater desalination facilities.

**Eastern Alternative** — Construction of a new pipeline from the east to deliver water from the Colorado River.

Each alternative includes the following common elements:

- Existing pipelines will be rehabilitated or replaced.
- Existing and future constraints or bottlenecks in the water delivery system will be identified and addressed, along with enhancements to the system's operational efficiency.
- Water treatment capacity will be increased through expansion of existing water treatment plants and/or construction of one or more new treatment plants.
- An additional 100,000 acre-feet of water storage capacity will be developed.

### Approved: Seawater Desalination

The Water Authority board of directors selected seawater desalination as the preferred alternative for providing a new, safe and reliable water supply for the region. Seawater desalination removes salts and other impurities to produce very safe, high-quality water for drinking and other potable water uses.

### Benefits of Seawater Desalination

- A regional seawater desalination plant provides a new supply source.
- The seawater desalination process produces very safe, high-quality drinking water.
- The Pacific Ocean effectively becomes a drought-proof storage reservoir of water that is not subject to weather cycles.

- The Pacific Ocean is a supply for which the region does not have to compete.
- The cost of desalinated seawater is competitive with the cost of other new water supplies.
- Technology advances are likely to continue to push the future cost of seawater desalination downward.
- Diversification of water supply sources reduces potential impacts of supply cutbacks to any single water source.



### Addressing Environmental Concerns

The future water supply and delivery projects recommended in the master plan have potential environmental impacts the Water Authority must analyze and address. This is being done in two phases. A Program Environmental Impact Report was finalized and certified in November 2003. It provides an overall evaluation of cumulative environmental impacts that are anticipated from the group of projects within the master plan. Later, as each individual project within the plan is needed, a more detailed, project-specific environmental review will be conducted based on the overall findings of the Program EIR.

### Do You Want More Information?

Copies of the Draft Regional Water Facilities Master Plan and the Final Program EIR for the master plan are available on compact disc at the San Diego County Water Authority: (858) 522-6600. The documents are also accessible on the Water Authority's Web site at [www.sdcwa.org](http://www.sdcwa.org).

For additional information, please call the toll-free Project Information Line at (877) 682-9283, Ext. 7004. Your call will be returned within one business day.



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