



San Diego County  
Water Authority

# San Diego County Water Authority

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 \$126 billion economy and the quality of life of 3 million residents.**

### Search for Water

The history of the San Diego region revolves around a never-ending search for a safe, reliable water supply in this arid region of Southern California. Beginning with the native Americans, and later the Spanish missionaries and early settlers, local water supplies provided sufficient water for the county until World War II, when a vastly expanded military and industrial presence doubled the local population. When water shortages threatened the area's wartime mission, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order directing the Navy to build the area's first aqueduct connecting to the newly completed Colorado River Aqueduct owned by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

The San Diego County Water Authority was created through special act legislation by the California Legislature in 1944 to administer the region's Colorado River water rights, import water and take over the operation of the aqueduct from the Navy. The first imported water arrived in the county in November 1947.

### Reliability Through Diversification

Providing a safe and reliable water supply to the people who live and work in the San Diego region is the mission of the Water Authority. The region's 3 million residents and \$126 billion economy depend upon the Water Authority to fulfill this vital mission.

The best way to ensure that reliability now and into the future is to avoid being overly dependent on a single source of water. Today, up to 90 percent of this region's water is imported from

a single supplier. Over the past several years, the Water Authority has been actively pursuing programs and projects to enhance water reliability by diversifying its water supply portfolio. All imported water is currently obtained from MWD. The Water Authority is MWD's largest member agency, purchasing up to 30 percent of

MWD's supplies annually. It takes as many as 20 other MWD member agencies to equal the amount of water the Water Authority purchases each year.

### Securing New Imported Water Supplies

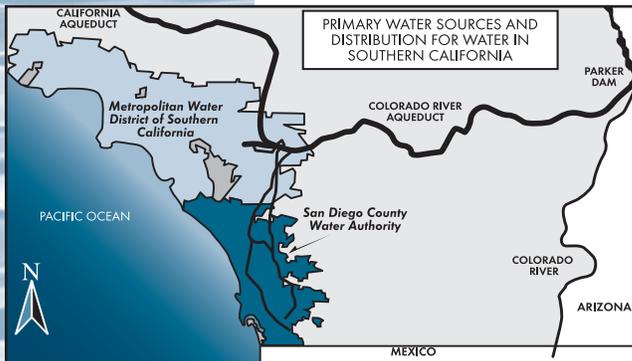
On Oct. 10, 2003, representatives from the Water Authority and three water agencies signed documents required to implement the Quantification Settlement Agreement, a landmark accord that fundamentally changes the way Colorado River water is distributed and used in California. This historic agreement provides California a transition period to implement water transfers and supply programs that will reduce California's over-dependence upon the Colorado River and reduce the state's draw to its 4.4 million acre-foot annual apportionment. Importantly for San Diego County, the QSA clears the way for the annual transfer of up to 200,000 acre-feet of water from the Imperial Irrigation District to the Water Authority. An additional 77,700 acre-feet of water will flow annually to the Water Authority for 110 years. The additional water will be conserved by concrete lining the All-American and Coachella canals to prevent seepage losses. When deliveries of the water are fully ramped up, San Diego County will receive nearly 280,000 acre-feet of new, highly reliable water supplies.

### Making the Most of Local Supplies

Looking at ways to do more with resources available locally is a key part of the Water Authority's efforts to diversify its overall water supply portfolio.

The development of local water resources has for years been a Water Authority focus. Efforts to make the most of local resources include recycled water programs, using modern reverse osmosis technology for the desalination of brackish (salty) groundwater in several different parts of the county, groundwater storage projects, and ongoing water conservation efforts that have saved more than 345,000 acre-feet of water since 1990.

Recently, desalination of seawater has emerged as a promising new supply. The Water Authority is exploring the development of the region's first large-scale seawater desalination project. If approved, it would be



the largest seawater desalination project in the Western Hemisphere —producing 56,000 acre-feet per year—and would be located adjacent to the Encina Power Station in Carlsbad.

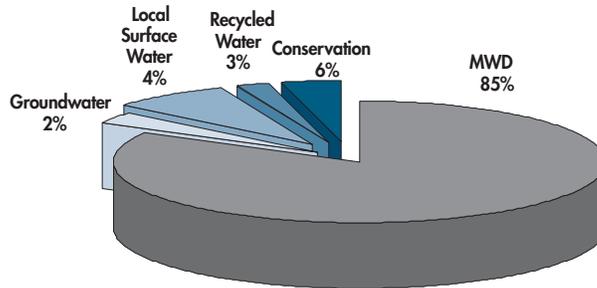
### Mapping the Region's Water Future

Planning is key to any effort to meet future water needs, and in January 2003, the Water Authority released its Draft Regional Water Facilities Master Plan. The master plan studies supply options and the facilities required to meet the San Diego region's water needs through 2030.

Of the alternatives examined in the master plan, seawater desalination emerged as the best option to pursue, based on its cost-effectiveness and the degree of water reliability it could provide the region. The master plan discusses the potential for desalinated seawater to become an important part of San Diego County's water supply portfolio by increasing the amount of water available to the region locally, and correspondingly, reducing dependence on imported supplies. Tapping the ocean could provide a drought-proof supply of water that would help protect the San Diego region in times when low snow packs in the Sierra Nevada or Rocky mountains — or increased demands by other water agencies — lead to cutbacks in imported water supplies. Because desalinated seawater would be a supply developed locally, it could provide greater cost certainty than San Diegans now have and could also lead to enhanced water quality for the region.

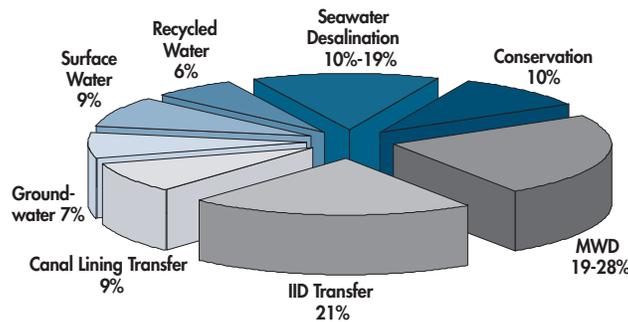
### Diversifying the Water Authority's Water Supply Portfolio

#### Water Supply in 2003



Actual Demand in 2003: 649,622 AF

#### Water Supply in 2020



Projected Demand in 2020: 813,000 AF

#### FAST FACTS

Member agencies: 23  
 6 cities  
 4 water districts  
 3 irrigation districts  
 8 municipal water districts  
 1 public utility district  
 1 federal agency (military base)

Established: June 9, 1944

First water delivered to county: Nov. 24, 1947

Area served: 908,974 acres

Population served: 3 million

Economy served: \$126 billion

Number of primary pipelines: Five

Miles of pipeline: nearly 300

Acre-foot (AF): Large amounts of water are measured by the acre-foot. One acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, or enough water to cover one acre to a depth of one foot. An acre-foot can supply the household needs of two typical families for one year.

### Member Agencies

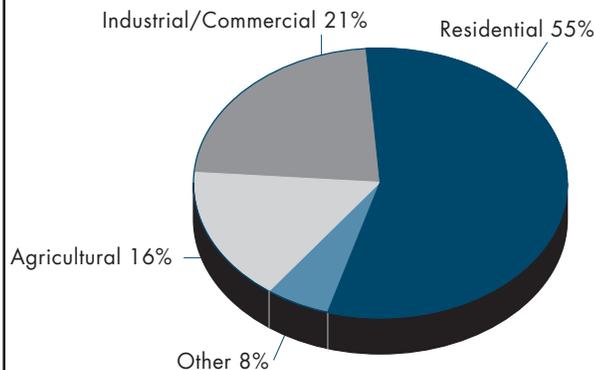
- 1 Carlsbad MWD
- 2 City of Del Mar
- 3 City of Escondido
- 4 Fallbrook Public Utility District
- 5 Helix Water District
- 6 City of National City\*\*
- 7 City of Oceanside
- 8 Olivenhain MWD
- 9 Otay Water District
- 10 Padre Dam MWD
- 11 Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base
- 12 City of Poway
- 13 Rainbow MWD
- 14 Ramona MWD
- 15 Rincon del Diablo MWD
- 16 City of San Diego
- 17 San Dieguito Water District
- 18 Santa Fe Irrigation District
- 19 South Bay Irrigation District\*\*
- 20 Vallecitos Water District
- 21 Valley Center MWD
- 22 Vista Irrigation District
- 23 Yuima MWD

A member of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors also serves as a representative to the Water Authority board of directors.  
 \*\* The Sweetwater Authority is a service organization for the city of National City and the South Bay Irrigation District.

### Water Conservation (FY 2003)

Conserved water: more than 43,000 acre-feet (most water was conserved by installation of ultra-low-flush toilets and low-flow showerheads)

### Water Use in San Diego County



Source: April 2003 survey of member agencies



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