



Our Region's Trusted Water Leader
San Diego County Water Authority

WEDNESDAY WATER TALK

by Sandra L. Kerl, General Manager

Good afternoon, San Diego County leaders.

So much has changed since mid-March that mid-April almost feels like a different century. Obviously, at a societal level **we face significant health and economic impacts** that will ripple through our lives for years regardless of when things return to "normal."

That's causing us at the Water Authority to start **rethinking how we do what we do**. Our core mission of providing safe and reliable water supplies won't change because everything else we do across the region depends on it – from farming to tourism to biotech.

But **today's radically different reality is causing us to look hard at our processes and projects**, some of which need to be updated today and some of which need refinement to help us navigate post-pandemic realities. Here are a few examples of things that are changing:

- **We're making strategic budget reductions immediately while recommending additional actions by our Board during the mid-year budget review**, in anticipation of reduced revenues that result from shuttered businesses and factories using less water than anyone could have anticipated. These steps include a hiring freeze and postponing some non-essential projects.
- **We've asked the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California to do the same** in hopes of moderating or eliminating its rate increases for 2021. So far, MWD hasn't signaled any cost cutting, but it's important that you know our efforts to minimize rate increases extend throughout our organization.
- In addition, our member retail agencies are **adapting to the Governor's executive order prohibiting water shutoffs** and mandating reconnections. It will require significant agility by water agencies to manage declines in payments while sustaining critical operations and infrastructure.

Regardless of the challenges, here's something that's not changing: Each day, **water and wastewater employees across the region report for duty to ensure these vital systems operate** as needed. For instance, we're repairing a 96-inch diameter pipeline in North County after we detected the potential for a rupture. Work crews are maintaining separation and wearing protective gear – but the **work goes on, just like it does at water and wastewater facilities across the region**. In addition, employees in finance, public outreach, water planning, human resources, tech support and other disciplines are working from home to sustain our core mission. This week, we've rolled out regional ads affirming that water supplies remain safe and plentiful because of the work we do.

Finally, I'm encouraged to report that our partnership with the San Diego Food Bank to **promote community wellness and fight hunger** has generated more than \$5,500 in donations. It's a good start – but just a small piece of the overall need. I invite you to [click here](#) and help make an even bigger impact.



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