

# Bay-Delta

Seeking Cost-Effective Solutions



**DIVERSIFICATION**  
Enhancing Water  
Supply Reliability



**Improving  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta is a 1,000-square-mile network of islands and waterways at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers east of San Francisco Bay which supports hundreds of species of fish and wildlife. The Bay-Delta is also the hub of massive state and federal water projects that serve tens of millions of residents and businesses, including those in San Diego.

Bay-Delta water supplies have become increasingly affected by deteriorating ecological conditions which have led to regulatory restrictions on pumping water south. The California Legislature has long recognized the conflict, and in 2009, it established a state policy to decrease dependence on the Bay-Delta for meeting California's future water supply needs.

The Water Authority's only source of Bay-Delta water is through its water purchases from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Over the past two decades, the Water Authority and its member agencies have diversified the region's supplies and significantly reduced reliance on MWD, and in turn Bay-Del-

## Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta

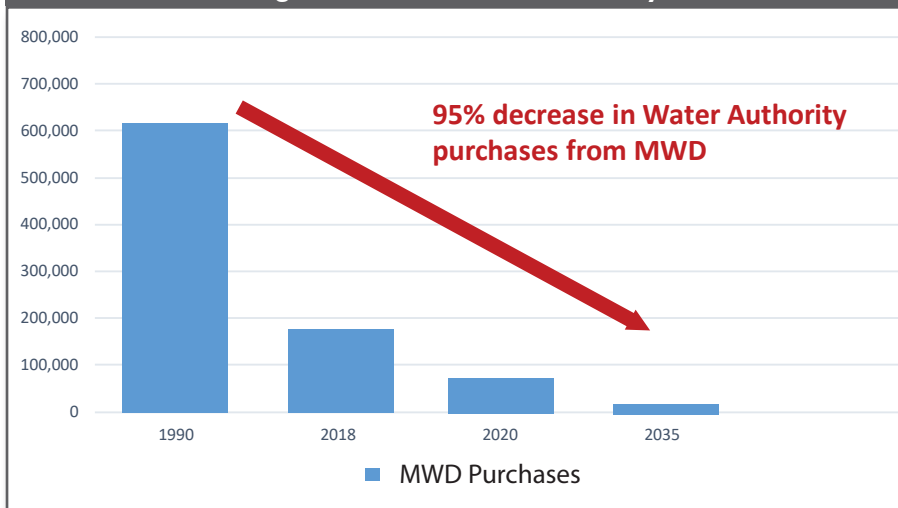


ta supplies. As an example, San Diego County has reduced its reliance on Bay-Delta supplies from about 50 percent in the 1990s to about 11 percent over the past five years. As the region continues to diversify its water sources, reliance on the Bay-Delta will continue to decline.

## A Challenging Environment

Two-thirds of California's population receives some water from the Bay-Delta via the State Water Project or the federally operated Central Valley Project water transportation and delivery systems. However, the Bay-Delta's ecosystem has been in decline due to development, farming, water exports, climate change and other factors. Increasing environmental regulations to address ecosystem deterioration, coupled with frequent prolonged dry periods, have significantly reduced water exports from the Bay-Delta in recent years.

## San Diego Reduces Demands on Bay-Delta



*The Water Authority has significantly reduced reliance on the Metropolitan Water District, the only source of Bay-Delta water for San Diego County, and the trend will continue for decades.*

State and federal agencies have proposed various strategies over the past few decades to address these challenges, and Gov. Gavin Newsom is taking a fresh approach to the complex issues. In July 2020, the Newsom administration released a Water Resilience Portfolio containing “a suite of complementary actions to ensure safe and resilient water supplies, flood protection and healthy waterways for the state’s communities, economy and environment.” One element of the portfolio is the single-tunnel project to transfer water across the Bay-Delta, which is undergoing environmental review.

### Conditional Support for Tunnel Project

The Water Authority has a long history of supporting efforts to stabilize the Bay-Delta ecosystem and protect San Diego County ratepayers. The agency supported the 2009 Delta Reform Act that established the coequal goals of water supply reliability and Bay-Delta ecosystem restoration and set the state policy to reduce reliance on the Bay-Delta. Over the past two decades, San Diego County has embraced a portfolio approach to water resilience and reduced its reliance on the Bay-Delta, while protecting the region’s \$245 billion economy and the quality of life for more than 3.3 million people.

In addition, the Water Authority’s Board of Directors formally supported Newsom’s efforts to develop a water resilience portfolio that meets the needs of California’s communi-

ties, economy and environment through the 21st century and advances a single-tunnel Bay-Delta project. Importantly, the Water Authority Board made its backing of the single-tunnel proposal contingent on a project financing plan that treats San Diego County ratepayers fairly through the proper allocation of project costs.

Those Board actions followed one of the most exhaustive reviews of the potential Bay-Delta fix by any water agency in the state over the past several years. The review included dozens of Board presentations and public meetings on the topic, and the Board heard from an array of stakeholders and experts, including Bay-Delta community leaders and elected officials, farming interests, state agencies, independent economists, environmental groups and others.

In December 2020, MWD’s Board of Directors voted unanimously to fund the agency’s share of environmental and pre-construction costs for the tunnel.

### Focus on Funding Questions

The Water Authority remains focused on how the costs of a single-tunnel Bay-Delta fix would be allocated. If the state and MWD recover tunnel costs through water supply charges – consistent with the purpose of the project and in keeping with the state’s historical definition for similar projects – an average Water Authority ratepayer could pay about \$1 per household per month when the project is fully implemented, in proportion to how much water they take from the Bay-Delta.

However, costs could soar several times over if the state or MWD allocate tunnel costs on transportation charges because the Water Authority would be uniquely affected as the only agency that uses MWD’s Colorado River Aqueduct to transport large volumes of independent water supplies.

For more information about the Bay-Delta, including related documents, go to [sdcwa.org/bdcp](https://sdcwa.org/bdcp). ■

### A Water Supply and Ecological Resource

The 1,300-square-mile Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta provides a significant portion of the water supply for an estimated 27 million Californians. It is the largest West Coast estuary in the Americas, supporting more than 750 wildlife and plant species, including more than 40 aquatic species. It also is situated on one of four major North American paths for migratory birds.



Sevenmile Slough in the Bay-Delta



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Water Leader

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