



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.

Despite a major atmospheric river that doused San Diego County and California a few weeks ago, **it's been a dry "wet season" across the state and the Southwest.** Even with that late-January storm, the statewide snowpack today is about two-thirds of average.

That's not a very promising outlook, and we're already seeing discussions about drought restrictions in Northern California. One reason for the challenges is that the State Water Project, which delivers water from Northern California, continues to struggle. Over the past year, two major reservoirs on the state system have dropped by nearly 1 million acre-feet of water – a greater decline than during the historic drought years of 1976-1977. **The news is somewhat better in the Colorado River Basin,** where the snowpack is about 80 percent of average.

Even though there's not much to cheer about when it comes to precipitation, it's important to remember that **the Water Authority and its member agencies have strategically built a diversified water supply portfolio so that we are ready for dry times.** Over the past two decades, we have invested in reservoirs, secured the largest ag-to-urban water transfer in U.S. history, and developed new local water supplies like seawater desalination.

As further insurance for our region, our conserved Colorado River supplies from the Imperial Valley are among the highest-priority supplies on the entire river, meaning they are highly reliable. They also are our lowest base-cost supply, **providing additional water supply security, rain or shine.**

In addition, we have supported residents and businesses with rebates and educational programs to expand water-efficient practices, resulting in a 38% drop in water use since 2007. These **investments protect our \$245 billion economy and our quality of life** from the potentially devastating impacts of drought and other water supply shortages.

Given the inherent uncertainties of the future, the Water Authority staff has been coordinating closely with our 24 member agencies to develop potable water reuse projects and refine our supply and demand projections for the coming decades. We go through this planning process every five years, and it helps to **ensure sufficient supplies in an era of climate change.** That planning process in years past has helped develop the resilience we enjoy today. I will update you when the forthcoming plan is released and welcome your input as we continue to steward the region's most precious natural resource.

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