



# San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue • San Diego, California 92123-1233  
(858) 522-6600 FAX (858) 522-6568 www.sdcwa.org

February 3, 2017

Chair Felicia Marcus and  
Members of the Water Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

#### MEMBER AGENCIES

- Carlsbad Municipal Water District
- City of Del Mar
- City of Escondido
- City of National City
- City of Oceanside
- City of Poway
- City of San Diego
- Fallbrook Public Utility District
- Helix Water District
- Lakeside Water District
- Olivenhain Municipal Water District
- Otay Water District
- Padre Dam Municipal Water District
- Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base
- Rainbow Municipal Water District
- Ramona Municipal Water District
- Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District
- San Dieguito Water District
- Santa Fe Irrigation District
- South Bay Irrigation District
- Vallecitos Water District
- Valley Center Municipal Water District
- Vista Irrigation District
- Yuima Municipal Water District

#### OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

- County of San Diego

Dear Chair Marcus and Members of the Water Board:

On behalf of the San Diego County Water Authority’s Board of Directors, I have attached to this letter a Board Resolution adopted on January 26 declaring an end to drought conditions in San Diego County and asking your agency to rescind the drought emergency regulation this month for areas no longer experiencing drought conditions. This action by the 36-member Board of Directors is fully supported by a strong record demonstrating that water supply and demand conditions in San Diego County do not warrant continued emergency drought status. While San Diego County is no longer experiencing drought conditions, the Water Authority has committed to continue its Live WaterSmart campaign to promote water-use efficiency and minimize water waste regardless of the weather. The Water Authority is taking a strong leadership role to promote the wise use of water as a civic duty, and a perpetual state of false emergency actually hampers that important effort.

Several factors led the Board to adopt the resolution:

- Over the past three decades, the region has invested approximately \$3.5 billion to improve water reliability, and those investments mean we have sufficient supplies per the state’s stress test for at least three more dry years. In fact, over the past two years, we stored 100,000 acre-feet of water for future dry years. We strongly believe that residents and businesses should reap the value of their investments, or they will not continue to invest in water supply reliability.
- Water supply conditions statewide far exceed normal conditions, and they have rebounded beyond the levels that were deemed satisfactory when the previous drought emergency was terminated in 2011.
- Residents and businesses in San Diego County continue to follow WaterSmart practices, reducing water-use by 17 percent from June through December of 2016 compared to the same months in 2013.

- Continuing a drought emergency and related restrictions in the face of substantially improved water conditions – not to mention flood emergencies throughout the state – undermines the credibility of water agencies, particularly during actual supply emergencies.

Water Supply Conditions

As you know well, this most recent prolonged drought is one of many that California has faced over the entirety of the known hydrologic cycle. You may recall that prior to this current drought emergency, the previous Administration under Governor Schwarzenegger had declared a statewide drought in June 2008. At that time, statewide rainfall was below normal for multiple years and critically dry water conditions were identified for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River basins. Additionally, water storage in many of the state’s reservoirs was far below normal, including: Lake Oroville, which was at 50 percent of capacity; Lake Shasta was at 61 percent of capacity; and Folsom Lake was at 63 percent of capacity.

In March 2011, Governor Brown terminated the drought emergency. The decision to terminate the drought emergency was based on several factors, including:

- At the fourth snow survey of the season, water content in California’s snowpack was measured at 165 percent of the season average.
- A majority of California’ major reservoirs were at above normal storage levels.
  - Lake Oroville – 104 percent of average
  - Lake Shasta – 111 percent of average
- The Department of Water Resources announced State Water Project allocations at 70 percent (final SWP allocation in 2011 was 80 percent).

**Statewide conditions today compare extremely favorably to those same factors and conditions that warranted a rescission of the drought emergency declaration in 2011:**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>February 2017</b>
Water content of California snowpack	165% of average	171% of average  110% of April 1 average (traditional peak date)
Lake Oroville storage	104% of average	120% of average
Lake Shasta storage	111% of average	114% of average
State Water Project Allocation	70%	60% (as of January 18)

For San Diego County, water supply conditions are equally improved:

- Precipitation at Lindbergh Field is at 151 percent of average.
- Precipitation at Ramona Airport is at 189 percent of average.
- Colorado River Basin snowpack is 156 percent of seasonal median.
- Colorado River Basin precipitation is 136 percent of seasonal median.

Based on the improved hydrologic conditions, both statewide and in San Diego County, this region is not in a drought condition, nor is it projected to experience water supply shortages this year.

#### San Diego Regional Investments

San Diego has a long legacy of statewide leadership in the area of water conservation and water use efficiency. Beginning in 1991, virtually every major water conservation statute in California had its genesis in the Water Authority's Board room, from ultra-low-flow toilets, to water efficient plumbing fixtures and appliances, to water metering statewide, to outdoor landscape irrigation efficiency. With the Water Authority as bill sponsor and San Diego legislators as bill authors, the San Diego region has been at the forefront as leaders in advancing and making progress on water conservation and water use efficiency in California for decades.

In addition to efforts focused on furthering the statewide water conservation ethic, the San Diego region's ratepayers also invested approximately \$3.5 billion over the past three decades to increase regional water supply reliability. These investments include drought-resilient supplies such as seawater desalination, as well as new and expanded storage facilities. In addition to the Water Authority's investments, its 24 member agencies also invested, and continue to invest in drought-resilient supplies such as recycled water and desalination. To prevent the benefits of these substantial investments in water supplies from being fully realized by ratepayers is breaking the public's trust. In 2016, those assets produced tangible improvements in the region's ability to withstand drought conditions, including adding 50 million gallons a day to the region's water supply from the Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant, and placing 100,000 acre-feet of conserved water into the newly expanded San Vicente Reservoir. Unnecessarily extending the emergency drought regulation will only serve to disincentivize future investments in water supply.

These investments and the continued focus this region has placed on water use efficiency allow the San Diego region to continue to reduce its reliance on the Delta and improve regional self-sufficiency of water supplies. As you also know, the previous self-certification stress test analysis developed by the SWRCB showed that the San Diego region has sufficient drought-resilient supplies, like seawater desalination, recycled water, and storage to meet demand, even assuming three consecutive dry years. The vastly improved supply conditions this year have only served to bolster this analysis.

Based on the drought-resilient water supplies available to the San Diego region, coupled with the ongoing water use efficiency that is a way of life in this region, the region is not in drought conditions, nor is it projected to experience water supply shortages for the next three years.

#### Customer Credibility

As you know, water agencies are a varied mix of local government entities – some independent special districts and some are a utility department within a municipality. The Water Authority's 24 member agencies reflect that diversity, and the Water Authority's Board of Directors also reflects a diversity in elected and appointed officials. However, no matter how a Board member has been placed on a water agency board or the Water Authority Board, there is a very clear obligation to serve the needs of customers within the community and to be a responsive public official.

Over the last several years, the Water Authority and its member agencies have asked the San Diego region's 3.3 million customers to make lifestyle changes and endure significant reductions in water consumption in response to the drought. Indeed, all Californians have made sacrifices during the drought emergency. In addition to reductions in water consumption within the San Diego region, our citizens have also been asked to make sizable investments in projects intended to improve water supply reliability and resiliency, even in the face of prolonged drought conditions. Knowing that approximately \$3.5 billion in water supply reliability investments have been made over the past three decades, it is understandably confusing for customers who have been asked to consistently make reduction after reduction in their water consumption patterns. Even more so, as California has endured a myriad of major winter storms and water supply conditions have substantially rebounded, even to the extent of flood emergencies being declared across the state, the credibility of water managers and Board members is being called into question more and more frequently as the state continues down a path of extending the drought emergency.

If water managers and Board members lose credibility, it will be difficult to rebuild that trust and credibility when customers are asked for new investments through rate increases to construct new water supply reliability projects within the region. Additionally, an extremely important consideration regarding the unnecessary continuation of drought conditions is the potential undermining effect such a condition has on the region's ability to attract new businesses, including international businesses, and retain and support expansion of existing businesses.

The Resolution passed by the Water Authority's Board of Directors last week was not a symbolic statement. Rather, it was taken with great consideration of the record that very clearly supports a return to normal conditions in San Diego County. Statewide hydrology, the proven drought resiliency within the San Diego region, and efforts to maintain a long-term focus on water-use efficiency warrant the discontinuation of the drought emergency regulation.

Chair Marcus and Members of the Water Board

February 3, 2017

Page 5

There are a few communities within California, specifically parts of the Central Valley and pockets along the lower Central Coast (near Santa Barbara), still experiencing groundwater basin overdraft and potential water supply shortfalls. State involvement in those areas is crucial to ensure a reliable supply of water for those communities.

We urge you to allow the statewide emergency drought regulation to expire this month for those communities no longer experiencing drought conditions. That will allow the stakeholder community to focus on developing a meaningful long-term water-use efficiency framework that supports the many productive uses of water across our diverse state, our economy and our quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark G. Muir". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "G".

Mark Muir  
Chair  
Board of Directors

Attachment

RESOLUTION NO. 2017- 01

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY DECLARING AN END TO DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

WHEREAS, on January 17, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in California due to severe drought conditions (Proclamation No. 1-17-2014); and

WHEREAS, on May 5, 2015, the State Water Resources Control Board (the “State Water Board”) adopted Article 22.5: Drought Emergency Water Conservation Emergency Regulation (“emergency regulation”) that included a mandatory statewide reduction in potable water use and conservation standards for urban water suppliers; and

WHEREAS, on May 9, 2016, the Governor issued Executive Order B-37-16 directing the State Water Board to: 1) adjust the emergency regulation through the end of January 2017 in recognition of differing water supply conditions across the state and 2) to prepare for the possibility of another dry winter, develop, by January 2017, a proposal to achieve a mandatory reduction in potable water usage that builds off of the mandatory 25 percent reduction in previous Executive Orders and lessons learned through 2016; and

WHEREAS, on May 18, 2016, the State Water Board enacted a revised version of the emergency regulation that allowed for a self-certification of supply reliability to determine the urban water supplier’s conservation standard; and

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2016, the San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors adopted Resolution 2016-07, approving submittal to the State Water Board the aggregated conservation standard for individualized self-certified conservation standards as required by emergency regulation Section 864.5, Self-Certification of Supply Reliability for Three Additional Years of Drought; and

WHEREAS, the self-certification conducted pursuant to Section 864.5 of Article 22.5, demonstrated that the Water Authority and its member agencies have adequate supplies to meet projected demands under the conditions outlined in Section 864.5 for all three dry years; and

WHEREAS, precipitation, snowpack water content and reservoir levels statewide have significantly improved this water year, which only improves the emergency regulation Section 864.5 self-certification supply reliability analysis conducted by the Water Authority and its member agencies; and

WHEREAS, precipitation in the northern Sierra is at 217 percent of average as of January 23, 2017, tracking higher than the wettest year on record (water year 1982-83); and

WHEREAS, snowpack water content, as of January 23, 2017, in the northern Sierra is at 158 percent of average and statewide is at 193 percent of average and 104 percent of the April 1 average peak; and

WHEREAS, reservoir levels in State Water Project reservoirs, Lake Oroville and San Luis Reservoir, are at 126 percent of average and 102 percent of average, respectively, as of January 22, 2017; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Water Resources estimated on January 18, 2017 that it will be able to deliver 60 percent of the requested State Water Project water this year, and this estimate is likely to be adjusted upward after additional snowpack and runoff readings from the January 2017 storms; and

WHEREAS, in the upper Colorado River Basin, precipitation is at 133 percent of average and snowpack is at 161 percent of the seasonal mean, as of January 23, 2017; and

WHEREAS, rainfall at Lindbergh Field is at 172 percent of normal and Ramona Airport is at 209 percent of normal, as of January 23, 2017; and

WHEREAS, water customers within the Water Authority's service area continue to use water efficiently even though the region has not been subject to state-mandated reductions under the emergency regulation since May 2016 - regional potable water use between June and December 2016 is down 17 percent compared with the same period in 2013; and

WHEREAS, there are a few communities within California, specifically parts of the Central Valley and pockets along the lower Central Coast (near Santa Barbara), still experiencing groundwater basin overdraft and potential water supply shortfalls, and state involvement in those areas is crucial to ensure a reliable supply of water for those communities; and

WHEREAS, on February 7, 2017 the State Water Board is scheduled to consider extending the statewide emergency regulation for another 270 days, until October 2017; and

WHEREAS, the Water Authority and its member agencies are leaders in prudent water supply management and water use efficiency. Over the past three decades, the region's ratepayers have invested more than \$3.5 billion to increase regional water supply reliability; and

WHEREAS, to not fully realize the benefits of these substantial investments breaks trust with our region's communities, businesses, and ratepayers; and

WHEREAS, to continue unnecessary drought emergency regulations hampers the region's ability to sustain a healthy and vibrant economy by undermining efforts to retain, attract and expand businesses and investment; and

WHEREAS, due to investments in drought-resilient supplies, such as desalination, recycling and reuse by the Water Authority and its member agencies and improved supply conditions statewide, San Diego County has adequate water supplies to serve the region for the next three years and is not in drought conditions;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of the San Diego County Water Authority resolves the following:

Declare an end to drought conditions in San Diego County and implore Governor Brown and the State Water Resources Control Board to end the statewide drought emergency and rescind drought emergency water use regulations for areas no longer in drought conditions.

PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED this 26th day of January 2017 by the following vote:

AYES: Unless noted below all Directors voted aye.

NOES: None.

\*ABSTAIN: Brady, Preciado, Simpson, and Wilson.

ABSENT: Morrison, Steiner, and Weston.




Mark Muir, Chair

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Croucher, Secretary

I, Melinda Cogle, Clerk of the Board of the San Diego County Water Authority, certify that the vote shown above is correct and this Resolution No. 2017- 01 was duly adopted at the meeting of the Board of Directors on the date stated above.

  
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Melinda Cogle, Clerk of the Board

\*Directors Fong-Sakai, Razak, Saxod and Tu representing the City of San Diego abstained from the vote. However, the City of San Diego has determined to cast all of the City's votes as a unit based on the majority vote of those City members present, and the majority of City members present voted in the affirmative.