

2017-2018 Water Supply Update



DIVERSIFICATION

Enhancing Water Supply Reliability

At the start of the 2018 “water year” on Oct. 1, the dominant winter weather patterns for California and the West remain uncertain, though there is an increasing chance that La Niña conditions will develop in the Northern Hemisphere in late 2017 and early 2018.

La Niña is characterized by a cooling of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and it is associated with changes in weather patterns around the globe. In California, this phenomenon sometimes correlates with drier conditions.

No matter how the rainy season plays out, the San Diego region will have sufficient water supplies – but it’s still important that residents and businesses continue to Live WaterSmart by making the most of limited water resources to help ensure long-term supply reliability for the region.

Plentiful Snow and Rain Boost Supplies

The 2017 water year delivered large amounts of rain and snow across California, ending statewide drought conditions. Rainfall for the 2017 water year at Lindbergh Field,



Sustainable, low-water landscapes are becoming the norm in San Diego County.

the City of San Diego’s official measuring station, totaled 12.73 inches as of Sept. 25 – 2.44 inches above average. Many parts of the region received significantly more rain.

More importantly, water year 2017 set precipitation records in Northern California, reviving critical water sources. Approximately 95 inches of precipitation fell in this region during the water year – 190 percent of average. That boosted stored water supplies in the State Water Project’s two main reservoirs – Lake Oroville and San Luis Reservoir – by 1.38 million acre-feet from August 2016 to August 2017.

On the massive Colorado River system, total water storage increased by 5 percentage points from August 2016 to August 2017, eliminating the potential for a 2018 water shortage in the lower Colorado Basin and reducing the shortage probability to just 15 percent in 2019.

Drought ends, WaterSmart commitment continues

The wet conditions in late 2016 and early 2017 prompted the Water Authority’s Board of Directors in January 2017 to formally declare an end to drought in the region. At the same time, the agency committed to continue its long-running efforts to promote water-use efficiency as a way of life in San Diego County through its Live WaterSmart outreach and education campaign.

For decades, the Water Authority and its member agencies have promoted water-use efficiency with resources such as home water-use checkups and rebate programs. Even before the state emergency water-use mandates were imposed in 2015, per capita water use



in the San Diego region had decreased nearly 40 percent since 1990.

When drought conditions subsided, residents and businesses across the region continued to embrace water-use efficiency. Regional water use from June 2016 through August 2017 was 18 percent below the levels in 2013, the state's baseline period.

For more information on water-saving resources, go to WaterSmartSD.org.

Region invests in water security

While the weather plays an important role in water supply availability, the Water Authority and its 24 member agencies have secured sufficient supplies to meet the needs of the region's \$220 billion economy and 3.3 million residents by investing approxi-

mately \$3.5 billion in water supply and infrastructure projects over the past three decades.

Today, the San Diego region enjoys a portfolio of highly reliable water supplies, including the nation's largest seawater desalination plant and the nation's largest ag-to-urban water conservation-and-transfer agreement. In addition, the Water Authority has added water storage capacity and upgraded conveyance systems to make sure water is available when and where it's needed.

Local retail water agencies also have made – and are in the process of making – major investments in drought-resilient supplies such as water recycling, potable reuse, and desalination projects that further increase regional water supply reliability. ■

Top 10 Ways to Live WaterSmart!

- 1. Seek (free) professional help.** Request a no-cost home water-use evaluation and receive site-specific water-saving recommendations.
Details at www.watersmartcheckup.org.
- 2. Look for trouble.** Use your meter to check for leaks, and monitor water bills to check for changes that may signal a leak or other problems.
- 3. Load 'em up.** Wash full loads of laundry and dishes to save water, energy and time.
- 4. Come clean with the car.** Patronize car washes that recycle water.
(If washing at home, use a bucket, sponge and self-closing hose nozzle.)
- 5. Turn off the tap.** Don't let the water run when brushing teeth, shaving and lathering; wash fruit and vegetables in a bowl of water; scrape food waste instead of rinsing.
- 6. Start making WaterSense.[®]** Replace older appliances and fixtures with efficient WaterSense[®] models, and take advantage of incentives to save money.
- 7. Tame your turf's thirst.** Water only when needed. Test by stepping on your grass.
If it springs back when you lift your foot, it doesn't need water. Irrigate in the evening or early morning, and set lawn mower blades to 3 inches to reduce evaporation.
(Make sure to comply with local irrigation rules.)
- 8. Work from the ground up.** Improve your soil's ability to retain moisture by aerating heavy or compacted soil and routinely incorporating compost. Add mulch around trees and plants.
- 9. Handle with care.** Regularly check your irrigation system for leaks, misting, overspray, runoff and broken sprinkler heads. Repair promptly. Upgrade to water-efficient irrigation systems to ensure plants receive precisely the water they need.
- 10. Get an upgrade.** When adding or replacing trees, shrubs, groundcovers or flowers, choose less-thirsty varieties. Group plants with similar watering needs together. Incorporate plants such as edibles and shade trees that provide added benefits.



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