

May 20, 2021

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

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OTHER
REPRESENTATIVE

County of San Diego

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the San Diego County Water Authority, we wish to share our appreciation for your leadership to help California navigate through water shortage and drought conditions. We sympathize with the local conditions experienced in those counties in which you've declared drought emergency conditions, and we are particularly grateful that you have publicly shared your observations regarding the need to evaluate water shortage and drought conditions on a county-by-county or region-by-region basis. As you know very well, every region within our huge state is different in terms of climate, water supply portfolio, investments in drought-resilient water suppliers, hydrology, and ability to withstand prolonged water shortage conditions. As you have framed, one-size-fits-all solutions to many issues facing California – including water shortage or drought conditions – don't work well and are unnecessary.

We applaud your focus on water resiliency, sustainability, and bringing the right set of tools to address very complex drought issues. Your "Water Resilience Portfolio" serves as an important framework to guide efforts to insulate communities and regions from drought. Importantly, we've all learned lessons from the most recent prolonged drought that can be used to help guide our collective drought preparation and response during 2021 and into future years, and there are opportunities available to continue improving drought resilience and sustainability going forward:

- **Localism should be determinative.** As you've noted publicly throughout your communications related to the COVID-19 pandemic, different regions of California have different needs and localism should be determinative in the state's approaches to addressing broad policy issues. Some regions may be unable to withstand multi-year drought conditions, while others – like the San Diego region, for instance – have invested substantially in resiliency and sustainability in drought-resilient water supplies to make their regions resilient. As you outlined during your recent press events relative to the drought, local water supply and demand conditions should determine what steps regions need to take to sustain their economies and quality of life. That will help everyone in California avoid inequitable and counterproductive measures that would depress our economy just as it's restarting after the year-long pandemic pause.
- **Utilizing our existing tools – like water supply "stress tests" – can be useful indicators for implementing targeted drought response solutions.** Landmark water use efficiency legislation – AB 1668 (Friedman) and SB 606 (Hertzberg) – was signed into law in 2018, just as the most recent multi-year drought was concluding. The statutory framework contained important provisions to meaningfully advance California's water conservation and water use efficiency ethic for years to come. Importantly, the

legislative package also included a robust drought preparation and response component. Now is the time to allow that framework and structure to be implemented by water managers throughout the state. In July of this year, suppliers will submit 2020 Urban Water Management Plans that include a five-year drought risk assessment comparing supply and demand for five dry years. In July of 2022, annual water supply and demand assessments or “stress tests” will be submitted. There is also an effort to encourage voluntary assessment reporting this year which would help provide a better “real-time” look at supply and demand projections. Drought risk assessments and water supplier “stress tests” that provide an evaluation of a community’s ability to withstand drought conditions are important measures that can be implemented in the near-term to provide an ongoing check-in regarding drought response needs within various communities and regions. We encourage your Administration’s expansive use of these available tools that were designed and approved for exactly the type of water shortage situation that California is now entering.

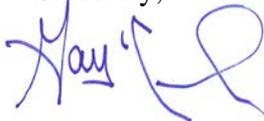
- **Building local capacity and resilience through Lake Mead:** The Water Authority’s ongoing efforts to ensure a reliable water source for San Diego County in combination with the conservation efforts of residents, farmers and businesses, have put us in a position to assist other regions in need. In order to help other agencies provide a reliable water source for their counties, the Water Authority continues to pursue authorization to store water supplies in Lake Mead, which is declining due to a two-decade drought in the Colorado River Basin. The ability to store water in Lake Mead would create the potential for other water management strategies that would improve Lake Mead water levels and water supply reliability for the Basin States and meet the needs of people, farms and the environment throughout the Southwest.

The Water Authority has long been a leader in shaping California water policy to advance a meaningful statewide water use efficiency ethic. We are also proud of the investments we’ve collectively made within the San Diego region to model the portfolio approach to water supply resiliency and sustainability that you and your Administration have framed within the context of the “Water Resilience Portfolio.” Water use efficiency practices coupled with investments that have been made by ratepayers throughout the San Diego region have afforded us the ability to withstand previous prolonged drought conditions and help to insulate our region’s residents and economy on an ongoing basis from the devastating impacts of drought and water shortage.

Again, thank you for your continued leadership for California. As you know, water supply reliability, resiliency, affordability, and sustainability are among the most important policy issues within our state to support our much-cherished California quality of life and a robust statewide economy. We stand ready to provide any assistance and resources that you and your Administration may need in the days and weeks ahead as you consider water shortage conditions that are emerging in many regions of California.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Gary Croucher, Chair Board of Directors

Governor Gavin Newsom

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cc: Members, State Water Resources Control Board
Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
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