

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY

Subject

Water Supply, Conservation, and Reclamation

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Introduction and Purpose

Because San Diego is a semi-arid region with very limited local surface or groundwater supplies, about 90% of its water supply for urban and agricultural purposes is imported. Prolonged drought in the Colorado River Basin and environmental limitations on the importation of Sacramento Delta water are placing increasing stress on the region's water supply.

The Board of Supervisors has recognized that importation of water from outside the region must be continued, and maximum use should be made of existing water supply and conveyance systems. The public health impacts and economic losses to agriculture, business, and industry resulting from the loss of imported water would be considerable and cannot be dismissed.

Under normal conditions the San Diego region has enough local water storage capacity (assuming reservoirs are full) to supply water for six months to one year in an emergency. However, this available supply of water is not distributed uniformly and some areas could run out of water sooner than others. During prolonged droughts the available supply of water in storage may be considerably less than under normal conditions.

It is important to recognize that although the County is not a water purveyor, it can set a positive example to others in its commitment to conservation.

Water conservation and prudent management of this scarce resource must become a way-of-life for present and future generations of County citizens. As such, the Board of Supervisors has directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to initiate a Water Management Plan and Program to conserve water throughout all County-owned and operated facilities. Policies and action programs to achieve this goal are identified in Section I.

Because of the long-term nature of the problem and severe adverse potential consequences, it is necessary for the County to regulate water-using activities of private development projects in unincorporated areas. Therefore, the Board's water conservation and reclamation policy shall apply to both public and private projects.

In 1986, the Board established a Water Supply, Conservation, and Reclamation Policy. This Policy serves to direct and guide various water-related uses at County facilities and discretionary actions of the Board of Supervisors.

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This Policy serves to inform San Diego County's State and federal representatives that the County of San Diego, working in concert with the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) and local jurisdictions, can provide the proper response to the growing water supply problem.

Section I. Water Conservation and Reclamation in County Facilities and Parks.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that:

- a. The Director, Department of General Services shall manage County-owned and occupied buildings and facilities to standards established by this policy.
- b. The Director, Department of Parks and Recreation shall operate County parks to standards established by this policy.
- c. The goals and objectives of regional and subregional water conservation plans developed by local water authorities, water districts, and cities shall be endorsed by the Board and incorporated into this policy as necessary.

Procedures

1. Low-flow toilets (1.6 gal. or less), low-flow urinals (1.0 gal. or less) (or approved retrofit devices), and self-closing faucets for lavatories or hand-washing fixtures will be provided in all new County facilities, or in remodeled facilities where the remodeling includes replacement of the plumbing fixtures. Low-flow showerheads that use 3.0 gallons per minute or less shall be installed in showers. Existing flush valves and toilet tanks shall be modified to use the minimum amount of water practicable.
2. All sprinkler systems providing landscaping irrigation to an area of 0.5 acres or larger shall be equipped with an automatic flow-control device (such as a timer or moisture sensor override unit) or other acceptable irrigation management system. Drip irrigation and/or automated irrigation management systems shall be used to the maximum extent practicable. Irrigation systems should be monitored to ensure proper performance.

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3. All new landscaping installations shall make extensive use of low-water and drought-resistant plantings in accordance with the County Zoning Ordinance Section 6712, et seq. (Standards Applicable to Required Landscaping), the Department of Planning & Development Services Landscape Water Conservation Design Manual, and Board Policy G-15, Design Standards for County Facilities and Property, or as amended.
4. Water use shall be minimized during peak electric demand periods (10 a.m. to 5 p.m. summer and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. winter). Landscape watering should be done at night or in the early morning to the extent practicable to minimize evaporation. Laundries should be operated at night or in the early morning.
5. Water leaks shall be reported immediately and repaired as quickly as possible.
6. The Department of General Services shall be responsible for ensuring that new and remodeled buildings conform to water conservation requirements, and that conservation measures recommended in the County Zoning Ordinance Section 6712, et seq. (Standards Applicable to Required Landscaping) and the Department of Planning & Development Services Landscape Water Conservation Design Manual, or as amended, are carried out in all County facilities.
7. The Department of General Services and Department of Parks and Recreation shall investigate and test irrigation equipment and drought-resistant plantings to assess the potential for water conservation.

Section II. General Water Supply and Conservation Policies

1. The Board of Supervisors shall support projects and programs that provide the citizens of the region with a long-term supply of local and imported water.

Discussion. Completion of the State Water Project (SWP), restoration of full flow to the Colorado River Aqueduct from water savings in the Imperial Valley, conjunctive groundwater storage in large underground basins (outside San Diego County), and other exchanges would provide for continued use of existing imported delivery systems. Obtaining long-term storage agreements in Lake Mead and other reservoirs is a good example of non-structural-type solutions that would enhance San Diego County's water supply. Such approaches might minimize environmental damage while preserving prior public investments.

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The Board recognizes recent court decisions and public concern over potential environmental impacts to the Sacramento Delta region and upstream counties of origin, with large-scale water exports out of the area. Implementation of the Federal/State Bay-Delta Ecosystem Partnership Agreement, Federal Central Valley Project Improvement Act, construction of storage reservoirs along the SWP Aqueduct, water transfers/exchanges, and other mitigating measures will help to preserve and improve environmental conditions in the Delta. This should allow for SWP-contracted entitlements to be delivered to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and other contractors as previously authorized by the State's voters.

2. The Board shall support development of cost-effective and environmentally acceptable surface and groundwater storage facilities.

Discussion. These facilities are needed to conserve surplus wet-weather flows for delivery to water users during periods of peak demand. Due to the potential for disruption of both the State Water Project and Colorado River Aqueducts from earthquake activity along the San Andreas and other nearby fault zones, and levee failures in the Sacramento/San Joaquin area, the Board shall support efforts of the SDCWA and MWD to develop cost-effective storage facilities located near demand areas within San Diego County and/or away from known earthquake hazard areas.

3. The Board shall support efforts by members of the California Legislature and public and private organizations to establish voluntary water exchanges and free water markets in California and other Western states.

Discussion. Water marketing, while containing several unresolved institutional, legal, and economic questions, may have significant water supply benefits for semi-arid regions like San Diego County. The extent to which conveyance facilities are or could be made available to transport the water is a limiting factor. In most cases, facilities currently exist to transport water over long distances to the County. Because of this, development of additional conveyance systems might be postponed resulting in substantial cost savings to present and future water users. MWD and the SDCWA have the financial ability to compete for surplus agricultural or other water supplies. The Board shall actively support their efforts.

4. The Board shall, where appropriate, require water reclamation and reuse facilities that are shown to be cost-effective as part of new projects.

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Discussion. Water reclamation provides a significant source of new irrigation water to offset import demands or local water supplies for non-potable purposes. This Policy shall be carried out in concert with the County Administrative Code entitled, "Water Recycling Ordinance" (Sec. 67.501, et seq.) and the Water Quality Control Board - Region 9 adopted reclamation policies. In the event the basin in which a project is to be located has an adopted water reclamation and reuse program, the Board shall require conformance to provisions of that plan. The Board shall also support development of water repurification facilities that meet or exceed public health standards.

5. The Board shall, together with the SDCWA, support necessary changes in the water right allocations that will:
 - 1) Increase San Diego County's preferential water entitlement to a level commensurate with actual use or otherwise obtain assurances that any future water shortages will be spread evenly throughout the MWD.
 - 2) Provide agriculture with assurance that those who undertake conservation and/or water-reclamation programs will be entitled to an adequate water supply during water shortages.

Discussion. San Diego County water users, through the SDCWA, purchase approximately 25% of all water sold by the MWD each year, yet the SDCWA only has firm entitlement to approximately 15.8% of available MWD supplies.

During normal years there is little cause for concern. However, during dry or drought-year conditions, this could create serious problems for the region. It is important that any future shortages be shared equally among all imported water users.

The County, through its legislative program, shall provide greater assistance to the SDCWA in correcting any regional imbalances.

The other area of concern is with agriculture. Agriculture contributes significantly to the economic diversity and well-being of the San Diego region. In the event of water shortages, agricultural water deliveries could be severely reduced.

Agriculture in San Diego County uses approximately 65,000 to 130,000 acre-feet of water per year for irrigation, depending on weather conditions, or about 10% to 20% of the region's total annual water use. This contrasts sharply with other regions such

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as the Central Valley where agricultural water use is a substantially greater percentage of total water deliveries.

San Diego County farmers have demonstrated a commitment to efficient water use. It seems unjustified that they should be penalized for good water management practices. If agricultural water cut-backs are required, the burden of such reductions should be borne by the most inefficient users in the State.

6. The Board shall encourage and support environmentally acceptable research and demonstration projects that utilize non-traditional water production and conservation techniques.

Discussion. Incentives are needed to encourage public and private sector research and demonstration programs in such non-traditional water development areas as brackish water treatment, repurification, desalination, weather modification, watershed management, and non-structural programs. Innovative conservation programs are also needed.

The Board shall direct its representatives in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. to actively support legislative measures that will accomplish this goal. However, these demonstration programs should only be considered for public funding after a thorough review of environmental impacts and efficiencies in existing water management and water-right allocations.

7. The Board shall direct its representatives on the SANDAG Board and SDCWA Board to work with other local agencies in order to establish and maintain a uniform policy approach to water supply and conservation in the San Diego region.

Discussion. The SDCWA and SANDAG serve as the proper regional forum for local officials to address regional water problems. Those agencies are actively responding to assure the region's voice is heard at the State and federal levels. The Board shall continue to support these efforts and to provide staff support as needed.

8. The County will cooperate with water districts, cities, and other agencies on water issues of mutual concern, including the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the adequacy of the regional water supply. If deemed necessary, the County will participate in efforts to improve coordination between land use approvals and the region's water supply.

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Discussion. In spite of development of new sources of water and reduction in per capita consumption, the potential still exists for water demand to exceed supply.

It is important to monitor projected growth in conjunction with regional water availability. If it is determined that there is insufficient supply to meet the needs of projected growth, the rate of development might have to be slowed, and/or the types of development permitted may have to change. Since this issue involves regional facilities and supply, the County cannot act effectively on its own. While the County has land development jurisdiction over a large amount of territory in the San Diego region, a substantial percentage of new construction occurs within the cities.

Therefore, policies and procedures to regulate the allocation of water service need to be instituted on a regional basis.

The cities and the County are directly responsible for making land use decisions. The SDCWA together with its members, the water purveyors, would be the appropriate agencies to gather information on the status of the regional water supply. Coordination among these entities is needed to determine whether water supply will be sufficient to keep pace with currently projected growth, and to jointly determine appropriate land use actions in anticipation of, or in the event of, a water shortage.

9. The Board shall use its powers to assure that local water supplies and distribution facilities are protected.

Discussion. San Diego County has a number of dams and reservoirs that store local and imported water. The quality of the water in some of these reservoirs is threatened by encroaching urban developments. The Board shall not approve a subdivision map or development unless adequate provisions are made to protect water supply reservoirs from urban runoff.

10. The Board will incorporate water conservation requirements into the planning review process.

Discussion. The Board intends to significantly reduce water waste in new development through land development policies and regulations that mandate indoor and outdoor water conservation and water reclamation measures where appropriate.

Sunset Review

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by December 31, 2015.

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Board Action

06/10/86 (163)

12/03/86 (7)

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06/05/90 (43)

12/04/90 (56)

06/12/90 (120)

02/01/95 (23)

03/12/2002 (10)

04/07/2009 (7)

09/25/2012 (11)

CAO Reference

1. Department of General Services
2. Department of Planning and Development Services
3. Department of Public Works
4. Department of Parks and Recreation
5. Department of Environmental Health
6. Agriculture, Weights & Measures
7. Strategy and Intergovernmental Affairs Office