

CALIFORNIA

WATER

INLAND EMPIRE 2025

IEUA MARKS *75th Anniversary*

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY:

Recharge Project Hits Milestone

**WESTERN WATER CHAMPIONS
STATE FRAMEWORK**

JURUPA CSD

Earns Innovation Honors

**EASTERN MWD: *75* YEARS
STRONG**



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Dear Readers,

Happy Water Awareness Month! As we dive into May, I'm excited to present the latest issue of *California Water Magazine*. This month, we emphasize the crucial role each of us plays in ensuring a sustainable water future for our state.

With rising costs of energy, construction materials, and the ongoing need for safe, high-quality water, it's clear that cutting back isn't the solution. Instead, strategic investments are essential to address these challenges.

The Delta Conveyance Project, although seemingly expensive, is actually the most cost-effective way to secure our water future.

In our cover story, you'll hear from key voices in the water sector. They will provide regional and state perspectives on the Delta Conveyance Project's importance and challenges, as well as insights into the costs and effectiveness of the state's water delivery system.

Turning our focus to the Inland Empire, we'll explore how the region can secure its water future and address the unique challenges it faces.

This month, we're also hosting our Haiku H2O contest on Instagram, inviting poets across the state to share their best water-themed haikus. Here's one to spark your creativity:

Snow melts, rivers rise,
Flowing through our golden state,
Future's lifeblood flows.

Feeling inspired? Visit @socalwater on Instagram and share your haikus with us!

I hope you find this issue both informative and inspiring. As always, I welcome your thoughts and questions. Let's keep the conversation going and work together for a brighter water future.

Warm regards,



Charley Wilson
Executive Director and CEO
Southern California Water Coalition



NO 'SILVER BULLET' SOLUTION

Water Managers Balance Resiliency with Affordability

/ By Elizabeth Smilor /

A common refrain in households across the nation goes something like this: "Why is everything so expensive?" or "Did you see the price of (insert item or service)?" Across the board, expenses are rising from grocery bills and travel to energy and, yes, even water bills.

"It's difficult for the customers. We are just one more increase," said Craig Miller, General Manager of Western Municipal Water District (Western Water) that serves nearly 1 million customers across 527 square miles from western Riverside County to the border of San Diego County. "We're trying to change the message about water as not just an expense they have to pay; it is the lifeblood of our economy in California. We have to make sure people understand that water is an invaluable investment."

Local, regional and state water managers say they are adapting to climate and economic changes to bolster resiliency and sustain California's affordable and reliable water supply system. Water and wastewater rates remain relatively inexpensive, but the water industry is not immune to rising costs of materials, maintenance and labor. Industry leaders emphasized the need for creative financial solutions, partnerships and collaboration throughout the state, and investment into much-needed infrastructure updates — all of which will save money in the long run.

"There isn't a single silver bullet to affordability," said Deven Upadhyay, General Manager for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan), a 26-member cooperative that provides water for 19 million people in six counties. "It's a series of innovative revenue streams, programs with partners outside the service area and sound utility management programs that lead to more affordable outcomes for our public."

Last spring, the Metropolitan board approved a two-year budget that includes rate increases of 8.5% on Jan. 1 of this year and again on Jan. 1, 2026, charged to its 26 member agencies. For treated water, the rate increase will be 11% in 2025 and 10% in 2026. It also includes a small increase to the voter-approved property tax Metropolitan levies, amounting to an average increase of \$2-3 a month for the median value home.

The effect of Metropolitan's rate adjustment varies by agency and geographic area, because some are more reliant on imported water than others. On average, about 30% of the region's water is from Northern California via the State Water Project (SWP) and 20% is from the Colorado River via the Colorado River Aqueduct.

"The reason Metropolitan was brought into being was to build the Colorado River aqueduct. In reality, we were a financial innovation. ... We were created to help bear that cost," Upadhyay explained. The Colorado River aqueduct was developed in the 1930s and the State Water Project was built in the 1960s. Preventative maintenance has greatly extended the life of those systems and Metropolitan capital investments are for refurbishment and replacement of the vast network that carries the water to and throughout the region, he said.

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The State Water Project supplies Southern California with imported water through a series of aqueducts and reservoirs from Northern California.

"We need this infrastructure. What we see on the horizon is more climate risk and more swings in climate that we will be prepared for, but the reason we will be prepared is because we're steadily chipping away at that risk with this investment in infrastructure," Upadhyay said.

Securing the Most Affordable Water

Riverside and San Bernardino counties draw water from groundwater basins and produce recycled water, while also importing water from the State Water Project and Colorado River. It is also, water managers emphasize, one of the fastest growing regions in the state.

"California is now ranked the fourth largest economy in the world. For us to sustain that economic strength, you have to invest in water," said Joe Mouawad, P.E., General Manager of Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), that is the water, wastewater service and recycled water provider to nearly one million people within a 682-square mile service area in western Riverside County and northern San Diego County. "It's incredible that we are the fourth largest economy, but we still struggle with uncertainty of State Water Project supplies or Colorado River allocations. We need to make those essential investments to make sure we continue to thrive as a state."

Local agencies, including EMWD, Western Water, the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) and San Bernardino Valley Municipal

Water District (SBVMWD) invest in a wide range of projects from local stormwater capture, recycled water, groundwater storage to regional and state projects such as Pure Water Southern California (a regional recycled water project being developed by Metropolitan and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County) and the Delta Conveyance Project, a one-tunnel delivery improvement in the San Joaquin-Sacramento river delta.

"This isn't an either/or conversation. It is about trying to piece together all the puzzle pieces of a water portfolio in the most affordable way," said Jennifer Pierre, General Manager of the State Water Contractors, a statewide, non-profit association representing the 27 State Water Project contractors including Metropolitan and SBVMWD. "Agencies should take their most affordable source and maximize that supply and then make investments in other sources that provide more expensive, but perhaps more reliable water. That's what most are doing."

The most affordable source, water managers agree, comes from the State Water Project, which encompasses a service area economy worth \$2.3 trillion. This imported water is also necessary for blending usable recycled water.

"State Water Project deliveries have allowed Southern California to take water supply for granted," said California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth. "But the stakes are high, and after 60 years, re-investment is needed. In an outsized way, the Delta Conveyance Project will protect Southern California water supplies from drastic loss in a hotter, drier future."



Pure Water Southern California regional recycled water project is being developed by Metropolitan and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County.

In 2024, DWR released a benefit-cost analysis of the Delta Conveyance Project that showed the present value of improved water supply reliability is estimated to be worth, on average, more than \$33 billion in 2023 dollars over the project's lifetime, Nemeth said. The analysis found that for every dollar spent, \$2.20 in benefits would be generated. It also showed how economical State Water Project supplies are compared to the cost of stormwater capture, desalination, and recycling.

"The combined costs of an all-of-the-above water supply strategy are daunting," Nemeth said. "But water shortages are expensive and put public safety at risk when supplies for drinking, cooking, and bathing run low. Water supply disruptions or even the threat of disruption can drive away business and commercial and industrial investment over time." / See Affordability, p 23 /



RANCHO WATER'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE: Securing a Resilient Water Supply

Within the Temecula Valley located in Southern California, the Valle de Los Caballos (VDC) area continues to be a cornerstone of Rancho California Water District's (Rancho Water) long-term water resource management strategy. The VDC area holds critical groundwater supplies from two main water supplies - surface water that is released from Vail Lake and untreated import water from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. The VDC utilizes five large percolation ponds to supply the underlying groundwater basin from these water sources and extracts the groundwater from wells as needed.

With the goal of enhancing local water reliability and sustainability, Rancho Water is investing in vital infrastructure improvements, including new groundwater wells, a pump station, and an innovative in-line hydroelectric facility. These projects are essential in securing a resilient water supply for Rancho Water's customers and the surrounding region.

Expanding Groundwater Storage and Recovery

The Murrieta-Temecula Groundwater Basin represents an invaluable water resource, boasting a large area of untapped storage capacity. Rancho Water currently stores water in the Pauba Valley portion of the basin, and the District is working to maximize this capacity to bolster drought resilience.

In July 2024, construction and equipping began on the new groundwater wells which will significantly enhance Rancho Water's ability to recover stored groundwater when needed. The project entails installing essential infrastructure, including piping, pumps, motors, and other mechanical components. Once operational, these wells will increase Rancho Water's capacity to draw from local groundwater reserves, reducing dependency on treated imported water supplies.

Boosting Efficiency with a New Pump Station

Alongside the new wells, Rancho Water began construction in November 2024 on a state-of-the-art pump station at the VDC. This eye-pleasing facility will blend in with the surrounding aesthetic of Temecula's well-known wine country and include a regional pump station and chlorine contact tank.

Harnessing Renewable Energy with In-Line Hydroelectric Power

A groundbreaking addition to Rancho Water's infrastructure is the small, in-line hydroelectric facility at the VDC. Designed to capitalize on existing water pressure, this system will generate renewable energy while simultaneously reducing operational costs.

The new hydroelectric generator will offset the high energy costs to operate recovery wells at the recharge basin by producing an estimated 1.77 million kilowatt-hours of clean energy per year under existing conditions, with the potential to generate up to 3.39 million kilowatt-hours annually at higher flow rates. This translates to potential energy cost savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Rancho Water will initiate construction for this project in Spring 2025.

Building a Future on Sustainable Water Management

More than \$23 million in grant funding has been awarded for these projects from federal, state, and local agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) as part of the Investing in America agenda, the State Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the County of Riverside as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The ongoing efforts at Valle de Los Caballos exemplify Rancho Water's commitment to proactive and sustainable water resource management. By expanding groundwater recharge and recovery, optimizing energy efficiency, and integrating renewable energy solutions, these innovative projects will provide long-term benefits to the region. ○

For more information on the water resource projects at Rancho Water, visit RanchoWater.com/VDCproject



Clockwise from top left: Heavy equipment trenches the pipeline route to transport water for treatment and distribution; An aerial view of the pump station forebay walls being raised into place; A hot air balloon floats over Valle de Los Caballos.

NAVIGATING RISING COSTS AND REGULATIONS:

The Path Forward for California Water Agencies

As the cost of delivering clean water continues to rise, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD) faces growing challenges that impact both customers and the environment. Increasing energy costs, aging infrastructure, and evolving state regulations create significant pressure on EVMWD's ability to maintain and improve services.



EVMWD staff working at a treatment facility to showcase behind-the-scenes efforts to maintain water quality.

Water providers across California are contending with rising expenses due to inflation, escalating energy and supply prices, and the need to upgrade infrastructure. EVMWD, which serves over 163,000 people in the cities of Canyon Lake, Lake Elsinore, Wildomar, and portions of Murrieta, must balance these financial pressures while ensuring continued access to safe and reliable water.

One key example of how regulations impact local water agencies is the Canyon Lake Water Treatment Plant, a vital source of drinking water for our region. Recent state-mandated regulations required EVMWD to implement additional treatment processes to remove per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from the reservoir. PFAS, commonly referred to as "forever chemicals," pose challenges due to their persistence in the environment and potential health risks. To meet new state standards, EVMWD invested in advanced filtration technologies, significantly increasing operational costs. While these upgrades ensure continued water safety, they also require substantial financial resources, adding to the broader economic pressures facing the District.

The increasing costs associated with water treatment, energy consumption, and infrastructure maintenance present difficult decisions for EVMWD. While rate adjustments are necessary to keep pace with these financial demands, the District remains committed to transparency and minimizing the impact on



EVMWD's is committed to educating and engaging with residents about the rising financial demands and the impact they can have.

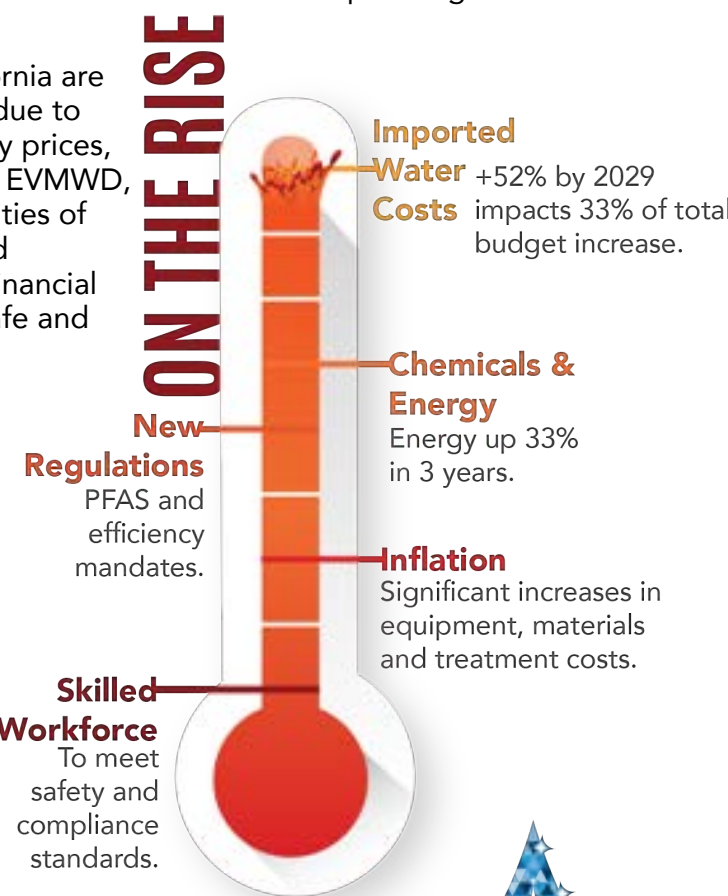
customers by prioritizing efficiency and securing external funding whenever possible.

To navigate these challenges, EVMWD is actively collaborating with state and local agencies to explore cost-saving solutions, such as securing grants and adopting innovative technologies. For example, the District has successfully secured millions in grant funding for infrastructure projects, allowing it to reduce financial burdens on ratepayers while ensuring compliance with evolving regulations. Community outreach and education play a crucial role in keeping residents informed about the impacts of rising costs and the proactive steps being taken to address them.

EVMWD remains dedicated to delivering safe, affordable, and sustainable water to its customers. However, as financial and regulatory pressures grow, partnerships and funding opportunities will be vital to ensuring the long-term resilience of the region's water systems. Collaboration among water agencies, state officials, and local stakeholders is essential to securing funding solutions and driving cost-effective strategies. By working together, we can ensure that water remains both high-quality and affordable for future generations. ○



Infrastructure repairs and upgrade projects, highlight the District's efforts to keep the water system functional and up-to-date.



ELSINORE VALLEY

MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
Honoring Our Past, Securing Our Future



The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) is a Joint Powers Authority serving the 2,650 square mile Santa Ana River Watershed, which includes major portions of Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. SAWPA works on a watershed-scale to address regional needs and is comprised of five member agencies:

Eastern Municipal Water District , Inland Empire Utilities Agency Orange County Water District , San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and Western Municipal Water District

SAWPA owns and operates the Inland Empire Brine Line, a 73-mile pipeline system, that protects the watershed's water resources through the responsible management of brine and salty wastewater discharges.

In addition, SAWPA and its member agencies work collaboratively to address the water resources needs of the Santa Ana River Watershed, ranging from ensuring water supply reliability and protecting water quality to protecting and restoring the environment.

Through these efforts, SAWPA's mission focuses on the long-term sustainability of the Santa Ana River Watershed, securing a healthy and reliable water resource for the region.

SAWPA Commission



MIKE GARDNER
CHAIR
Western Municipal Water District



GIL BOTELLO
VICE CHAIR
San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District



PHILIP E. PAULE
SECRETARY-TREASURER
Eastern Municipal Water District



JASMIN A. HALL
COMMISSIONER
Inland Empire Utilities Agency



DENIS BILODEAU
COMMISSIONER
Orange County Water District



Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan

SAWPA has embarked on a two-year effort to develop a Santa Ana River Watershed Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) for the region. Collaborating with various partners, SAWPA aims to gather input from public agencies and communities within the watershed to identify the most urgent climate-related risks and potential vulnerabilities to those risks. This initiative will address regional resilience to climate risks such as droughts, wildfires, increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and flooding. Building on the success of SAWPA's One Water One Watershed (OWOW) Program, which has strengthened water reliability and watershed resources for over 20 years, CARP focuses on enhancing climate resilience on a regional

scale. This will be achieved by developing adaptation strategies through partnerships with key stakeholders and engaging with community-based organizations across the region.

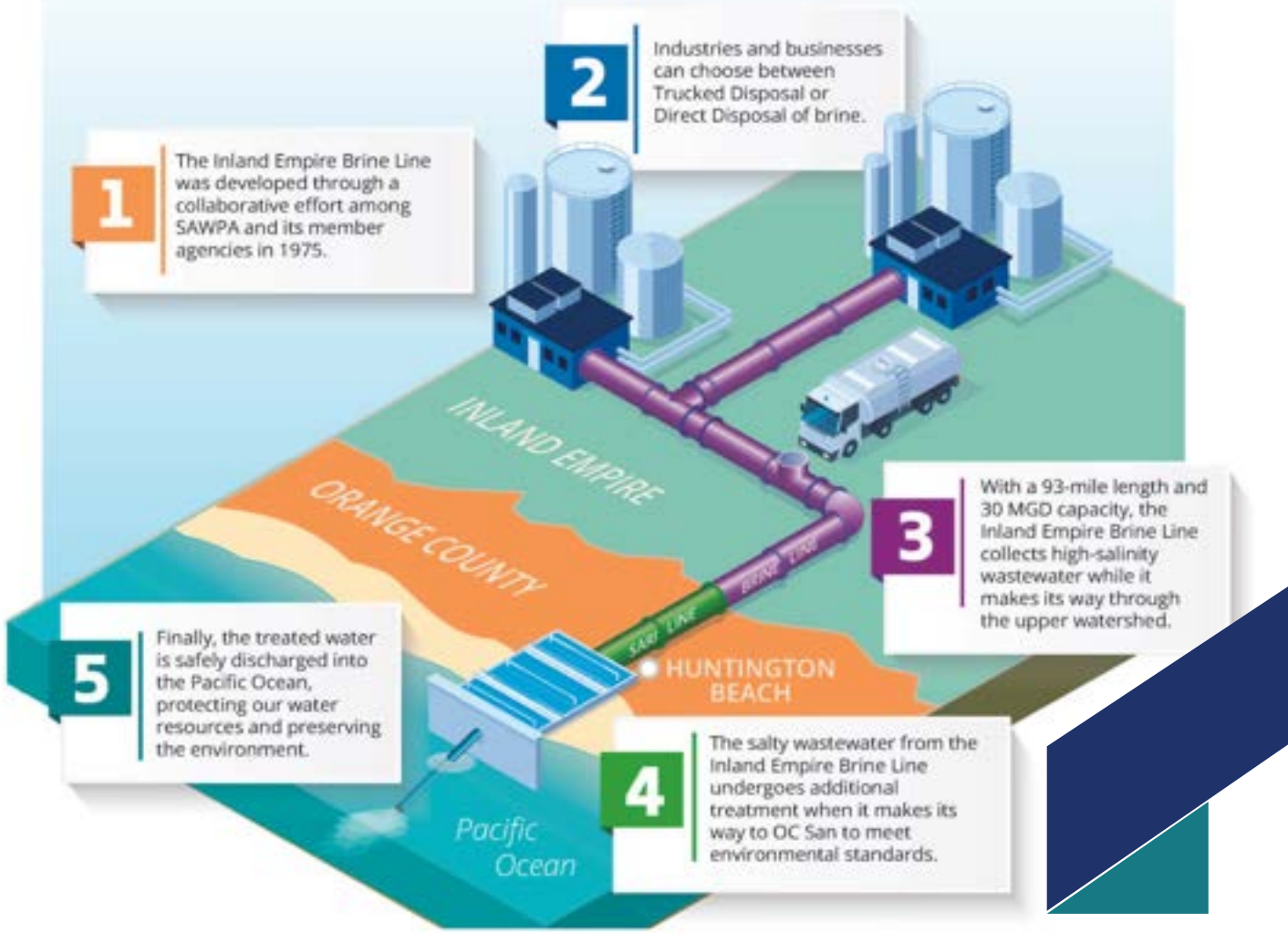
A key aspect of CARP is its emphasis on community involvement, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing key climate-related issues. The plan's partners include SAWPA member agencies, the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, the University of California Riverside, the Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative (ISC3), and numerous local community-based organizations. Through these collaborations, the plan will address climate resilience needs by involving public agencies and communities in planning and implementing projects.

For more information about CARP and SAWPA's ongoing efforts, visit [SAWPA.gov/CARP](https://www.sawpa.gov/CARP)



INLAND EMPIRE BRINE LINE:
Managing Salty Wastewater for a Sustainable Future

The Inland Empire Brine Line, created by SAWPA, offers a cost-effective method for salty wastewater disposal, ensuring water quality and regulatory compliance while emphasizing SAWPA's dedication to sustainability and water resource protection.



Cloud Seeding Pilot Program

In November 2023, SAWPA launched a four-year Cloud Seeding Pilot Program, to evaluate the effectiveness of cloud seeding to enhance the region's local water supply, which could potentially increase precipitation by 5-15 percent in targeted areas.

Due to burn scars from the wildfires in the summer of 2024 in the region, the Pilot Program has been postponed to avoid contributing to potential debris flows in the burn scar areas during storm events. The Pilot Program is scheduled to resume in November 2025. ○

For more information and to stay updated on SAWPA's Cloud Seeding Pilot Program, visit [SAWPA.gov/cloudseeding](https://www.sawpa.gov/cloudseeding)

IEUA LEADS REGIONAL COLLABORATION FOR 75 years

/ By Amy Bentley /

This year, the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA/Agency) marks a major milestone, reaching its 75th anniversary. For three-quarters of a century, IEUA has been dedicated to public health and environmental stewardship while serving as a leader in water and wastewater management.

It all began on June 6, 1950, when voters overwhelmingly chose to bring supplemental water to the region, forming the Chino Basin Municipal Water District, now called the Inland Empire Utilities Agency. What initially started as a voter effort to ensure that the region had access to imported water supplies has grown into a forward-thinking water and wastewater treatment agency that provides exceptional service to the community and promises a more sustainable future.

Today, IEUA serves approximately 950,000 people across 242 square miles in western San Bernardino County. The Agency delivers imported water, treats wastewater, develops recycled water for distribution and groundwater recharge, manages water-quality testing, produces high-quality compost, leverages renewable energy to offset a portion of electricity costs, and offers valuable education and outreach programs to all ages.

Throughout the decades, the Agency has successfully met many challenges and developed innovative sustainability programs. This includes meeting the requirements of the Clean Water Act, adding State Water Project supplies to the region's water portfolio to ease drought concerns, and being one of the first to pioneer water recycling.

In the 1970s, IEUA and its retail agencies recognized that wastewater was not waste, but a critical resource to support regional resiliency. Distribution of recycled water began using the new purple pipe system to the first recycled water customers in IEUA's service area: Whispering Lakes Golf Course and Westwind Park in Ontario and El Prado Golf Course in Chino. Today, there are more than 1,300 connections to IEUA's purple pipe recycled water system. In total, approximately 34,000 acre feet per year is being used by retail agencies through purple pipe or indirect potable reuse through the groundwater recharge program. This represents approximately 17% of the region's total water supply.



Regional Plant No. 1 in Ontario has been in operation since 1948. At right, the Regional Plant No. 3 basins.

In the 1990s, two new regional wastewater treatment plants were built to ensure system capacity as the region continued to rapidly grow: Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 4 in Rancho Cucamonga and Carbon Canyon Water Recycling Facility. Distribution systems were connected from Carbon Canyon Water Recycling Facility to Chino and the newly formed city of Chino Hills.

Since the 1980s, IEUA had been discussing a long-term solution for the disposal of biosolids. Then, in 2003, IEUA partnered with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts to form a Joint Powers Authority, the Inland Empire Regional Composting Authority. By 2007, the Inland Empire Regional Composting Facility in Rancho Cucamonga opened its doors as the largest indoor composting facility in North America. Managed by staff at IEUA, the Agency sends 100% of its biosolids to this facility to be developed into a high-quality compost. Not only is this a sustainable practice for IEUA, but the usage of compost for land application helps to improve soil health, water quality, and ultimately helps to reduce water usage.



The 2000s continued IEUA's emphasis on environmental sustainability with the building of IEUA's LEED platinum headquarters (pictured right), development of the Chino Creek Wetlands & Educational Park, and the implementation of IEUA's education program. IEUA also installed five megawatts of solar power at various facilities and a one-megawatt wind turbine at RP-4 in Rancho Cucamonga. Today, IEUA's renewable energy program offsets approximately 8% of electricity costs.

In 2025, new successes will lead IEUA to have an even greater impact moving forward. The Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 5 Expansion Project in Chino is nearing completion. This state-of-the-art treatment facility will significantly boost capacity and improve the quality of recycled water. This expansion is critical to ensure that IEUA can meet the region's evolving needs and continue to provide sustainable resources for a growing regional population.

On another front, the Chino Basin Program continues to drive transformative progress in regional water management. Planning efforts for an Advanced Water Purification Facility continue for this important project that will add 15,000 acre-feet of advanced purified recycled water annually to be stored in the Chino Basin. This program will boost local water supply flexibility and strengthen IEUA's ability to respond to emergencies and extended droughts, ensuring long-term water security with clean, local water supplies.

IEUA also remains dedicated to community engagement and education. Through campaigns like "Be Sewer Smart," residents are encouraged to adopt responsible practices like properly disposing of fats, oils, greases, and non-flushable wipes. This is important to protect critical infrastructure and public health, ultimately helping to maintain rate affordability by reducing negative impacts to IEUA's 89 miles of regional wastewater collection system pipeline and five treatment plants.

These achievements are all part of the Agency's continued effort to promote resilience and innovation. IEUA continues to advance local water supply development, sustainability, and environmental stewardship through cost-effective projects and programs that support affordability and reliability for generations to come.○



Clockwise from left: Purple pipes carry recycled water; IEUA's LEED platinum headquarters in Chino; the first Chino Basin Municipal Water District office building; the RP-5 Clarifier; a wind turbine at RP-4 in Rancho Cucamonga.

WESTERN WATER CHAMPIONS COMPREHENSIVE WATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP



As California faces mounting water reliability and climate challenges, Western Municipal Water District (Western Water) is emerging as a pivotal force in shaping the state's water future. Serving nearly 1 million people across inland Southern California, Western Water is leading on multiple fronts—from cutting water use by 50% in 10 years, to implementing Making Conservation a California Way of Life objectives to championing the transformative vision behind the California Water for All framework.

Driving legislative change for sustainable water management

Western Water is taking a leadership role in advancing Senate Bill 72 (Caballero), legislation authored by Senator Anna Caballero and sponsored by the California Municipal Utilities Association, California State Association of Counties, and the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance. With future generations in mind, the bill would establish water supply targets for the state. This updated plan will establish statewide water supply targets and modernize planning to address the realities of a changing climate. Western Water's active involvement reflects its deep understanding that effective water management requires both forward-thinking, collaborative water management coupled with an all-of-the-above approach to strategic water investments and demand management. "In order for our grandkids to live, work and thrive in California, our approach to water management must be holistic," explains Craig Miller, General Manager of Western Water. "Through our support of SB 72, we're helping to create a framework of abundance with a clear goal of ensuring efficient water supply for generations to come while taking into account the complexities of water management and the consequences of climate change."

Bridging water efficiency and water infrastructure

Western Water's dual focus on water efficiency and water infrastructure investment reflects the comprehensive approach envisioned by SB 72. In support of the bill's statewide planning goals, Western Water is helping to:

- Collaborate with the Department of Water Resources to shape updated 2040 and 2050 water supply targets that balance urban, agricultural, and environmental needs.
- Advance inclusive water planning by engaging tribal governments, recreation and environmental interests, labor groups, and environmental justice communities.
- Offer technical and regional expertise to support cost-benefit analyses of infrastructure projects that enhance long-term water reliability.
- Promote conservation as a smart, strategic tool that complements—not replaces—water supply development.

Supporting retail water providers across the region

While shaping statewide policy, Western Water continues to support its retail agencies in meeting current conservation requirements under the Making Conservation a California Way of Life mandate. The agency offers a suite of innovative tools and resources that help water retailers serve their communities more efficiently:

Advanced technical tools

- Sophisticated mapping systems for water usage analysis
- Data platforms for compliance tracking
- Water efficiency assessment models
- Infrastructure planning resources

Collaborative support network

- Regular technical training and capacity-building sessions
- Regional coordination meetings to align local and state goals
- Best practice sharing platforms
- One-on-one expert consultation services

These tools help agencies stay ahead of regulatory requirements, improve customer service, and plan for long-term resilience.

LOOKING AHEAD: A sustainable water future

As California prepares to address ongoing water supply challenges created by a changing climate, Western Water is positioning itself as a bridge between policy and practice. Its dual commitment to regional collaboration and legislative leadership shows how water agencies can proactively shape a more resilient, climate-ready future.

"Water security isn't achieved through conservation alone," concludes Craig Miller. "It requires a comprehensive approach that includes infrastructure investment, policy reform, and regional collaboration. Western Water is proud to help lead the way toward a more sustainable water future for all Californians." ○

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY AND REGIONAL PARTNERS CELEBRATE

Completion of Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Project

600 
ACRE SITE

1.5 
MILE LONG
CHANNEL

20 
GROUNDWATER
RECHARGE BASINS

80,000 
ACRE FEET OF ANNUAL
STORMWATER CAPTURE

San Bernardino Valley, in partnership with Western Water, City of Riverside Public Utilities, and San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, proudly marked the completion of the Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Phase 1-B Project with a ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony in February. The \$55 million infrastructure investment made by local water agencies significantly enhances regional water supply resilience by more than doubling local groundwater recharge capacity.

The Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Project will allow up to 80,000 acre-feet of stormwater per year to be captured and stored in the local aquifer, creating a critical supply of groundwater for future drought years. The project includes 20 new recharge and inter-basin conveyance infrastructure, ensuring local water resources are managed efficiently.

In addition to improving water supply reliability, the project took an innovative approach to environmental compliance, which helped the project be completed ahead of schedule and under the construction budget. To secure key state and federal permits, areas between the recharge basins will be restored and preserved for endangered species habitat, like the San Bernardino kangaroo rat and Least Bell's vireo.

"This site has long been a critical part of our watershed, especially the Santa Ana River alluvial fan," said Heather Dyer, CEO/ General Manager for San Bernardino Valley. "By leveraging this land for both water storage and ecosystem restoration, we are ensuring that both our human communities and the native ecosystems benefit for generations to come."

The Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Project ensures that more local water is captured during wet years and stored underground for future drought conditions—a key strategy in preparing Southern California for long-term water challenges. ○



A Least Bell's vireo fledgling. Photo by: Origin Biological



Drop structure at the Enhanced Recharge Project slows water flow to reduce energy and minimize channel erosion.





EMWD AT 75:

A Legacy of Innovation,
Collaboration, and
Water Affordability

On October 16, 1950, a small, rural water agency was formed through a public vote of landowners in the San Jacinto Valley. Its mission was clear: to help facilitate groundwater rights in the area while providing an essential resource for its residents.

Seventy-five years later, that agency stands among the leaders in California's water industry.

In the three-quarters of a century since its founding, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) has grown from serving a sparsely populated swath of farmland into California's sixth-largest retail water agency. Today, EMWD delivers safe and reliable water, wastewater, and recycled water services to nearly 1 million customers across a 682-square mile service area that is among the fastest-growing regions in California.

Along the way, it has also established itself as one of the state's most forward-thinking agencies, thanks to its diverse infrastructure investments, mutually beneficial partnerships, and sound policymaking.

As EMWD celebrates its diamond anniversary in 2025, it remains focused on the next 75 years as a trusted partner in the communities it serves.

"We are incredibly honored to celebrate 75 years of service," EMWD Board President Stephen Corona said. "With that in mind, our eyes are focused on the future. Our region is growing quickly, and we must be prepared to meet the challenges of that growth in the same way we have since our founding."

EMWD's service area is just 43 percent developed based on the long-term land use plans of the cities and counties it serves. With so

much forecasted growth, EMWD is investing \$785 million in its five-year Capital Improvement Plan. A significant portion of those efforts are to expand groundwater facilities throughout the region and meet the needs of anticipated growth in the service area.

- Among the key projects that EMWD has planned for the coming years are:
- Further expansion of its nationally recognized groundwater desalination program. In January, EMWD received an additional \$50 million authorization through the Water Resources Development Act of 2024. The funding enables the United States Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program to design and construct wells, pipelines and treatment facilities that will be turned over to EMWD. The additional infrastructure will increase the capacity of EMWD's groundwater desalination program by 5.4 million gallons per day – enough to serve 12,000 households each year.
 - EMWD's planned Purified Water Replenishment program has been awarded \$30 million in federal funding from the United States Department of Interior. The program will further purify recycled water, where it will be used to replenish the groundwater basin and one day be used as drinking water. The program will improve the quality and the quantity of groundwater in the San Jacinto Valley.
 - EMWD has 12 active construction projects that are funded in-part through the American Rescue Plan Act, courtesy of the County of Riverside. These projects are helping to expand water and wastewater infrastructure, including a handful of projects in previously underserved communities.



- EMWD has been highly successful in securing external funding to advance projects in communities that qualify as economically disadvantaged. This includes the ongoing efforts to extend sewer service in the Quail Valley community of Menifee.

These external funding efforts – totaling more than \$800 million in the past 25 years – are critical to expand necessary infrastructure while maintaining customer affordability. EMWD rates are among the lowest in the region and well below the United States Environmental Protection Agency's threshold for water affordability for the region.

EMWD's commitment to delivering value and long-term reliability for its customers extends outside the boundaries of its service area. California is at a crossroads with its water supplies due to a variety of factors. Outside of Diamond Valley Lake, which was constructed by The Metropolitan Water District (MWD) of Southern California, it has been nearly 50 years since a major statewide reservoir was constructed. The state's primary delivery system in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is antiquated and unable to handle the high flows from the atmospheric rivers that now deliver much of our water supplies in short amounts of time. When combined with shortages on the Colorado River, an evolving regulatory environment, and other factors, there are no easy, or inexpensive, solutions.

EMWD has been a leading agency in supporting statewide investments that align with climate adaptation. It has also been one of the major voices in advocating for a new business model for Southern

California's wholesale water supplier, The MWD of Southern California, to ensure financial and water supply stability for the future. By serving as a leading voice in advocating for modernization of infrastructure, regulations, and business practices, EMWD is ensuring that its customers will continue to have the water supply reliability they have come to expect.

EMWD is prepared to meet these challenges in the same way it met its original mission 75 years ago: through sound planning, a long-term commitment to sustainability, and executing its clearly defined vision of meeting the needs of not just what our region is now, but what it will be in another 75 years.

"We know that in the next 75 years, our region will continue to grow and look very different than it does today," Corona said. "We are prepared for what that future will look like and are honored to be a part of that evolution in both our local communities and our industry."

"Our first 75 years have been incredible, but we are equally as excited about what our next 75 years will look like and the role that EMWD will play in shaping that future." ○





CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AT JCSD

At the Jurupa Community Services District, excellence isn't just a goal—it's a culture. With a steadfast commitment to innovation, reliability, and service, JCSD continues to be recognized as one of California's premier public agencies.

This year, JCSD earned some of the most prestigious honors in the industry. Most notably, the California Water Environment Association named JCSD the Wastewater Collection System of the Year for the entire state, celebrating nearly seven years of zero sanitary sewer overflows. This recognition was later echoed on the floor of the California Senate, where JCSD was honored for its leadership in public service.

Innovation is also at the heart of JCSD's operations. The District received the Excellence in Innovation Award from the Association of California Water Agencies for its groundbreaking Heli-Hydrant Project, the first of its kind in the Inland Empire, enhancing aerial firefighting and regional emergency response. Complementing this, JCSD's recycled water project broke ground in 2024 and is set to deliver over 350 million gallons of recycled water annually, reinforcing long-term drought resilience.

Operational excellence also extends into JCSD's workplace culture. The District was awarded the IPMA-HR Agency Award for Excellence for its forward-thinking human resources programs and commitment to employee well-being. Its workplace culture was further celebrated with its designation as one of the Top Workplaces in the Inland Empire.

"Excellence isn't achieved by accident. It's the result of a shared purpose, strong leadership, and a team constantly pushing boundaries to better serve our community."



Chris Berch
JCSD General Manager



The Chino Basin Desalter Authority and JCSD were recently honored with the Plant of the Year award by the Southwest Membrane Operator Association for operating the Chino Basin II Desalter, showcasing its industry-leading practices in water treatment and recovery. Locally, JCSD's dedication to community engagement earned it the Eastvale Chamber of Commerce's Champion Award for its active support of regional business and civic growth.

With an eye on the future and a foundation built on performance, JCSD continues to set the standard for what public service can—and should—look like in California.



EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION AWARD
ACWA

EASTVALE CHAMPION OF THE YEAR
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WASTEWATER COLLECTIONS SYSTEM OF THE YEAR
CWEA

EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN RESOURCES AWARD
IPMA-HR

PARKS & RECREATION DISTINCTION FOR INNOVATION
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FACILITY OF THE YEAR
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FIRE & WATER:

A Challenging Relationship

Fire is always a threat in Southern California, home to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District. The district is one of California's oldest groundwater replenishment agencies and has conserved more than 481-billion gallons of water by diverting the natural flow of the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek into 72 percolation basins. Since 1912, it has combined fiscal stewardship with sustainability to proactively recharge water and improve water supply for the benefit of residents, local businesses, and native flora and fauna in San Bernardino County.

Fire Season

"During fire season, our team is on high alert to support first responders, including the US Forest Service and CalFire," said Betsy Miller Vixie, SBVWCD General Manager. "In addition to supplying water for fire fighting efforts, we are preparing for the unique challenges that post-fire stormwater debris presents to groundwater recharge and water delivery."

The 2024 Line Fire broke out near the district's Santa Ana Wash facilities and the agency coordinated with first responders to establish a dipping station just a few feet from where the fire burned. Ever mindful of water conservation, water unfit for delivery to residents by local cities and water agencies due to fire ash, was instead diverted to a basin. This water would then be cleaned as it percolated through the soil and filled up the region's aquifer.

Trusted Partnerships

Through the years, the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District has learned that the best approach to mitigating fire and stewarding the local aquifer is a network of trusted partnerships. This includes other water districts, as well as the US Geological Survey, US Fish and Wildlife, and Bureau of Land Management. These relationships allow district staff to continue maximizing groundwater recharge during and after wildfires, while limiting maintenance costs and assisting firefighting efforts. Throughout it all, the district remains vigilant to protect the natural resources – including the local water supply – that its community depends upon.○

Helicopters use water from the district's property for local fire suppression.
Photo Credit: SBVWCD



Photo Credit: SBVWCD

WILDFIRE AT SEVEN OAKS DAM - AVERTED

On January 8, 2025, a wildfire broke out at the Seven Oaks Dam in the San Bernardino Mountains. Drifts of smoke were spotted by the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District staffer, Tommy Purvis, on his early morning rounds. It is likely that below-ground embers had been quietly smoldering since the previous wildfire 2 1/2 months prior and were fanned by the Santa Ana winds.

Thanks to Tommy Purvis' keen eyes and fast thinking, staff at Seven Oaks Dam were alerted and they worked with the County of San Bernardino Fire Department, US Forest Service, and a team of Hotshots to get ahead of the nascent brush fire, stopping it from escalating. Thankfully, the fire never hit a flash point, or the mountain would have rapidly ignited and put the local community and water supply at risk.

Smoke wafts from a fire spotted by SBVWCD's Tommy Purvis the morning of January 8 at Seven Oaks Dam.
Photo credit: Tommy Purvis



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/ By Charley Wilson, Executive Director of the Southern California Water Coalition & Rich Lambros, Executive Director of the Secure Water Alliance /

California has often positioned itself as a leader in responding to the dangers of climate change. From pioneering clean energy initiatives to enforcing some of the strictest emissions regulations in the nation, the state has consistently taken bold steps to prepare for the future.

Yet when it comes to water infrastructure, which is also an important part of our response to climate change, we are falling dangerously behind.

For decades, California has relied on the Sierra Nevada snowpack to store water through the winter, gradually replenishing reservoirs as it melts in the spring and summer. But with climate change, more of California's precipitation is now falling as rain instead of snow, and the Department of Water Resources projects that climate change could reduce the state's water supply by up to 23% over the next 20 years.

Recent storms, while offering a temporary boost to our water reserves, provide a stark preview of the challenges ahead. Our existing infrastructure simply isn't equipped to capture and store water under California's new precipitation reality. Without major upgrades, California will continue to lose millions of acre-feet of water — water we desperately need for future droughts.

A recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California estimates that in early February alone, nearly 5.4 million acre-feet of water flowed into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during the storms. After accounting for the flows needed to maintain habitats in the Delta, over 2 million acre-feet flowed out to the Pacific Ocean.

The good news is Governor Newsom's Delta Conveyance Project was designed to help us prepare and improve the state's water security in the face of our changing climate. It will enable

California's water managers to capture water during intense rain events so we can move it and save it for the next drought.

Had the Delta Conveyance Project been operational during this year's storms, it could have captured over 700,000 acre-feet of that additional water — enough to supply more than 7 million people and nearly 2.5 million households for a year.

We should be improving our state's water storage infrastructure as well. Projects like Sites Reservoir could have captured 1.5-million acre feet of this lost water. And smart, well-structured groundwater recharge in the Central and Southern California will be an important opportunity for additional storage.

Investments in developing local supplies through wastewater recycling, stormwater recharge, and desalination are helping as well, but these projects can't match the Delta Conveyance Project's advantage of delivering additional volumes of water more affordably than other sources.

The good news is the DCP has made major progress over the past few months. In the past year, more than one dozen water agencies voted to continue funding the design and planning process for the Project.

The state also recently obtained a key permit to mitigate impacts on fish in the Delta. We are finally making progress, but more work must be done before the project can move forward.

California has never been afraid to lead. Now, it's time to bring that same bold vision to our water infrastructure. Smart investments in water infrastructure are how California can maintain its position as a leader in innovative solutions to the world's most pressing issues. Moving the DCP forward will help create a more climate resilient, secure future for all Californians. ○

OPINION

Recent Storms Show California's Water Crisis is a Question of Infrastructure

IT'S TIME FOR THE DELTA CONVEYANCE PROJECT



/ Affordability from, p 3 /

Eastern Municipal Water District's Mountain Avenue West groundwater replenishment facility in San Jacinto. Below, the groundbreaking for the now completed Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Phase 1-B Project with officials from partners including Western Water and San Bernardino Valley MWD.

Heather Dyer, CEO and General Manager of SBVMWD, which is a wholesale importer of water and a State Water Contractor for the eastern two-thirds of San Bernardino Valley with a population of about 714,000, agrees with the need for investment now, especially in Delta Conveyance. SBVMWD buys directly from the State Water Project like Metropolitan. Dyer explained that their water rates remain significantly lower because they charge a much higher ad valorem tax rate on property tax bills.

“We see investment in the State Water Project as a long-term strategy for the entire region so we feel it makes sense as part of property tax,” Dyer said, agreeing that not one singular solution exists for reliability and affordability. “We have to invest in the most valuable projects now. We’ve already invested in the State Water Project, so that’s the first. You cannot count on local supply to sustain this region. It was founded on bringing in water.”

Partnerships Are Vital

IEUA General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh said that IEUA is the only Metropolitan member to exclusively buy untreated imported water because their three major customers have treatment facilities. The rate increase on untreated water delivery is 1% this year and 8% next year. IEUA is a regional wastewater treatment agency and wholesale distributor of imported water, serving approximately 950,000 people



over 242 square miles in western San Bernardino County. Recently, IEUA's Board of Directors approved increases to the Agency's rates as a result of a comprehensive cost-of-service study.

“Even with those rate increases, we have one of the lowest wastewater treatment and collection rates in Southern California,” Deshmukh said, explaining the rising cost of treatment chemicals and regulation compliance as well as the need to invest in aging infrastructure. “If we don’t pay for the investments now, we’re going to be paying more later. It is more cost-effective to plan ahead rather than build when something fails. We look at what benefit exists over decades.”

Western Water, a wholesale and retail water provider, and EMWD, the state’s sixth largest retail water agency, both have tiered, budget-based rate structures. Both have upcoming public hearings on rate adjustments. They, along with other agencies have invested in local supply and conservation programs to diversify their water portfolios.

“But at the end of the day, there is a cascading effect between the Metropolitan rate adjustments and the costs that we have to recover,” said EMWD’s Mouawad. “We are currently partnering with Metropolitan on a regionwide affordability study. We try to maintain the lowest possible rates for our customers. We are able to do that through partnerships.”

Western Water’s Miller agrees partnerships are key as are long-term investments.

“The water industry is adapting to climate change. We also have to adapt in the form of partnerships,” Miller said. “Think of it as an analogy that the State Water Project is your house. It has served you well for 50 years, but the roof is leaking. You don’t abandon the house because your roof is leaking, you fix the roof. Delta Conveyance is an adaptation that we need to make to better move water to meet our future water

“There isn’t a single silver bullet to affordability.”



Deven Upadhyay
Metropolitan General Manager

needs. We recognize the financial pressures on our customers, but we have to have their help in developing big water supply projects, because that’s the cheapest option.”

For its part, Metropolitan is investigating and implementing additional streams of revenue, such as tapping into federal funds by leaving water in the Colorado River and brokering trades with agriculture. With local reservoirs, including Diamond Valley Lake, at record high levels this type of agreement is possible and prevented even higher rate increases, said Upadhyay. Through the Climate Adaptation Master Plan, Metropolitan is adapting planning and strategies for long-term resiliency, and that includes financial modeling, he said. More fixed revenue streams versus volumetric water revenue for investments would lead to more predictable rates.

“So, you’re asking for efficiency on an ongoing basis, but in a managed way,” Upadhyay explained. “Then, you don’t have this vicious cycle of asking for water use reduction leading to rate spikes later. I see investment in supply programs that allow us to avoid those disruptions in deliveries as also a way of helping affordability over time.” ○

IEUA's Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 5 in Chino, which is currently being expanded to increase its treatment capacity.





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