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MEMBER AGENCY OF THE  
METROPOLITAN WATER  
DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**Glen D. Peterson**  
MWD Representative

March 31, 2021

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol Building, Room 4140  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: AB 588 (E. Garcia) – Planned Regulatory Compliance – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Garcia:

I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 588, your planned compliance bill for new drinking water regulations. AB 588 would authorize the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) to set a period from 30 days to three years for reaching compliance with a new drinking water regulation. The bill would also require the State Board to identify actions to assist water systems to achieve compliance with a new regulation, under certain conditions.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (District) provides safe and affordable drinking water to over 70,000 residents in the western portion of Los Angeles County, including the cities of Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village. In our experience, some new drinking water regulations can be difficult to meet, requiring time for planning and implementation of the best approach to compliance. The State needs to recognize the special challenge faced by smaller community water systems in achieving compliance with all drinking water regulations.

AB 588 would establish an important requirement for the State Board to set a compliance period of 30 days to three years, when approving a new primary drinking water standard (Maximum Contaminant Level or MCL). The length of the period would be based on several factors, and on a case-by-case basis the Board could extend the compliance period up to 12 more months. Such a period is needed because a new MCL may trigger a series of actions needed to comply with it, and the process can take several months to several years to complete. Planning and environmental reviews that include engagement with our customers, rate setting and financing, and engineering work can easily take two years and likely more, and those steps may be required before construction work can even begin if new facilities need to be built.

Compliance with a new MCL can be costly and difficult but is generally manageable for larger water agencies such as ours. However, the challenge for smaller water systems and especially for systems serving disadvantaged communities is that the steps to reach compliance may be simply unaffordable. The State Board's analysis may even show the regulation to be economically unfeasible for many communities, so it is critically important to pass AB 588 to require the State Board to identify the actions needed to assist small and disadvantaged community water systems to achieve compliance. The Human Right to Water policy demands that all the State's residents are entitled to water that is *safe and affordable* and AB 588 will help to ensure there is a realistic path to make that possible for these most vulnerable communities.

We thank you for introducing AB 588 and strongly support its approval by the Legislature. If we can provide anything else to support the bill, please contact me at 805-670-9783.

Sincerely,



Joe McDermott  
Director of Engineering and External Affairs

cc: Community Water System Alliance



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

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*Note: Video clips of General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger and b-roll footage are [available here](#).*

March 31, 2021

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PREPARED FOR DROUGHT WITH METROPOLITAN INVESTMENTS IN STORAGE, CONSERVATION, DIVERSE SUPPLIES *State snow survey tomorrow expected to further illustrate critical drought conditions*

Despite critically dry conditions across the state, Southern California can count on a reliable water supply thanks to residents' enduring conservation efforts and the Metropolitan Water District's investments in storage and diverse supplies, agency officials announced today in advance of tomorrow's state snow survey.

The state Department of Water Resources snow survey is expected to provide the latest evidence that precipitation totals this year in the Sierra Nevada are far below average. The survey comes on the heels of DWR last week dropping the State Water Project water supply allocation from 10 percent to just 5 percent of contracted amounts, matching the record-low allocation recorded just six years ago.

The supply cut means Metropolitan will likely receive less than one month's usual supply of water this year from the state project, which on average provides about 30 percent of Southern California's water supply, Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said.

"In the long term, this is an alarming trend. And it's what we have expected from climate change," Kightlinger said. "The droughts are going to be drier. The peak storms are going to be stronger. The whole weather system is going to be flashier, much more volatile."

Metropolitan is managing through such volatility by taking advantage of wet years, like 2017 and 2019, to move as much water into storage as possible. The agency has increased its total storage capacity by 13 times since 1990, investing in surface and groundwater storage across the southwest.

Not only has Metropolitan built vital infrastructure, such as Diamond Valley Lake and the Inland Feeder pipeline, which allow surplus water to quickly be stored in local reservoirs, it also has forged partnerships with water agencies across California for groundwater banking and exchanges. And it collaborated with partners along the Colorado River to establish a program to store water in Lake Mead, known as Intentionally Created Surplus, to enable Metropolitan to provide a full Colorado River Aqueduct supply in dry years like 2021.

Taken together, Metropolitan now has more water in these storage accounts than it ever has before – a total of 3.2 million acre-feet. An acre-foot is the amount used by three typical Southland households in a year.

Kightlinger said this record reserve has been made possible, in part, because of reduced water use across the region that has continued since the 2014-2016 drought. During that drought, widespread conservation initiatives encouraged Southern Californians to make conservation a way of life. Residents replaced water-thirsty grass with California native and California Friendly™ plants, installed water-efficient devices and appliances, and embraced a water-conservation ethic that endures. Per capita potable water consumption dropped from more than 150 gallons a day in the years before the drought to an average of about 120 gallons a day last year.

Metropolitan’s diverse water supply mix also means that when the Sierra Nevada is critically dry and SWP supplies are slashed, the agency can turn to its Colorado River supplies to help make up the difference. However, while the Colorado River can provide immediate relief, its long-term water supply outlook is also becoming significantly more constrained by the impacts of climate change and drought conditions that have stretched beyond 20 years.

“The good news is, we have enough water to get through this critically dry year. We’ve been preparing for droughts like this. We have sufficient water in storage, Southern Californians have done a great job conserving, and the Colorado River provides a sort of insurance,” Kightlinger said. “But in the long run, we have to do much more to get prepared for the impacts of climate change. All of California’s sources of water are facing serious long-term challenges.”

Statewide, more investment is needed in projects to capture and store water when it is available, such as the Delta Conveyance Project, which would more sustainably move water across the Sacramento San Joaquin Bay-Delta. Such efforts are critical to help the state adapt to the emerging impacts of climate change, where average snowpack will be dramatically reduced and precipitation will fall in increasing large rainstorms, Kightlinger said.

Greater investment is also needed to drought-proof local water supplies, such as Metropolitan’s Regional Recycled Water Program, he added.

And on the Colorado River, the Basin-states and water agencies must continue to work collaboratively to ensure the river’s long-term sustainability as they begin their next round of negotiations to develop new guidelines and agreements later this year, he said.

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*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative that, along with its 26 cities and retail suppliers, provide water for 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.*