

"The Communicator" is prepared by the District's volunteer Communications Committee to expand our ability to better inform the ratepayers. It covers a broad range of topics in greater depth. Your feedback on "The Communicator" or on any topic is always welcome—RMWD Communications Committee

The Politics of Water

The Rainbow Municipal Water District is one of 24 agencies in San Diego County that receives its water from The San Diego County Water Authority. The San Diego County Water Authority was created in 1944 by an act of the State Legislature as a public agency to administer the region's Colorado River water rights. The Water Authority's strategy to improve supply reliability through supply diversification and infrastructure improvements already is paying off.

In recent years, imported water supplies to the region have been curtailed by dry conditions and new regulatory restrictions on water deliveries from Northern California. As a result, MWD has made mandatory cuts to San Diego County's allotted water supplies since July 2009. Those cuts have been offset to a significant degree by additional supplies independently obtained by the Water Authority, especially the long-term transfers of conserved water from the Colorado River.

Today, the State Water Project transports water from Northern California to urban residents and farmers throughout central and southern California, including San Diego County. Typically in recent years, about 30 percent of the region's water supply comes from the State Water Project.

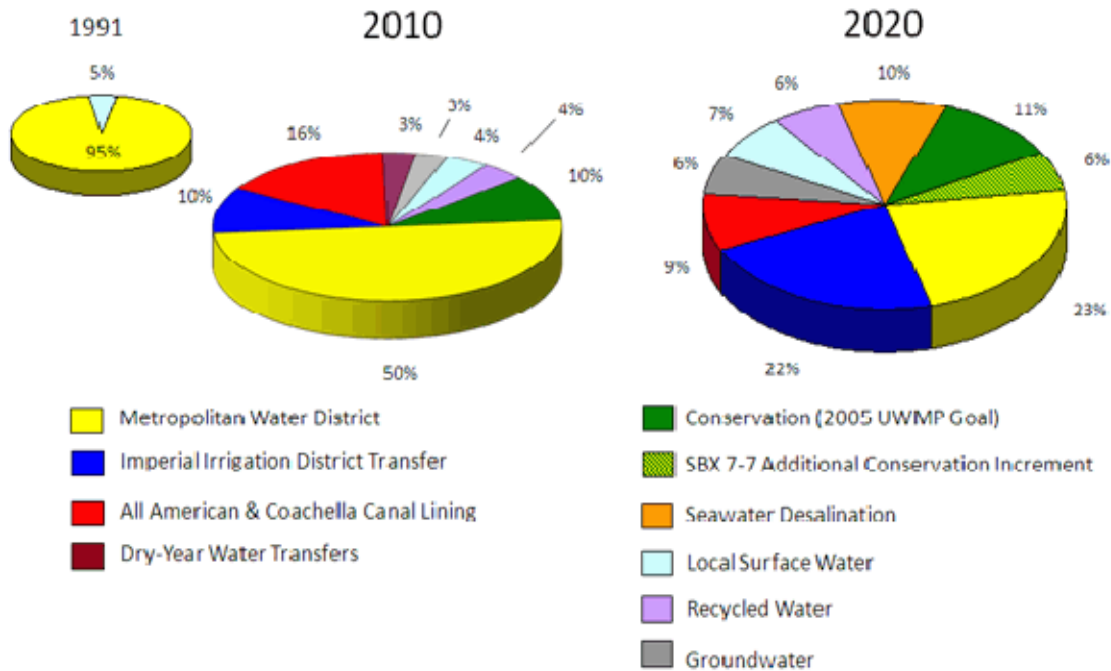
The Bay-Delta is formed by the confluence of the state's two largest rivers: the Sacramento flowing south from its headwaters near Mt. Shasta, and the San Joaquin flowing north from its origins high in the southern Sierra Nevada.

Water Authority officials currently work in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. to monitor a wide variety of legislative proposals and issues that could impact San Diego County's water supply. For example, in 2009 the Water Authority played a key role in helping pass a historic legislative package designed to make long-term improvements in statewide water management and water supply reliability.

The Water Authority also promotes legislation facilitating water conservation and recycled water programs. It joined with other urban water agencies to support legislation that allows California farmers to voluntarily sell their water to meet the needs of thirsty cities and industry.

To maximize the reliability of the region's water supply, for the past two decades the Water Authority, in coordination with its 24 member retail water agencies, has developed and executed a long-term plan to enhance the reliability of the region's water supply. That strategy includes diversifying the region's portfolio of water supply sources making major improvements to the region's water infrastructure, and promoting greater water use efficiency.

REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY DIVERSIFICATION



Despite record snow levels in the Sierras and the prospect of markedly improved water supplies the long term strategies are based on conservation. This does not bode well for growers in San Diego County. Water use plummeted nearly 13 percent during fiscal 2010, which ended June 30, compared with the previous fiscal year. In mid-2009, customers were told to trim their consumption by 8 percent or face penalties. Good news...not so if you look at the economics. All of the agencies that fall under the San Diego County Water Authority have costs that are amortized on usage. When the throughput goes down the cost per unit has to go up to compensate for the fixed costs that will not go away. It is an oxymoron that growers are faced with – more water available but due to conservation efforts less is being used and costs per unit volumes go up.

There is no simple answer for San Diego County growers faced with these dynamics. The politics are just not in their favor for the long term. Unless there is a movement to protect agriculture in the County the prospects are bleak. Growers will have to find their own source of water, and develop treatment levels that will insure that the chlorides and harmful salts are removed to achieve their objectives. San Diego County needs its agricultural element and every effort should be made to protect this vital part of our economy.

The Communication Committee is currently seeking volunteers to sit on the committee. Meetings are typically the first Monday of each month and last about two hours. Interested residents can contact Dawn Washburn at (760) 728-1178 for additional information.