Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors Affirms Support for Regional Desalination Efforts in Chino Basin

Expanded desalination program agreements will deliver additional local water supply

RIVERSIDE, CA – June 15, 2011 – Recognizing the importance of expanding local groundwater resources, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) Board of Directors approved a Local Resources Program (LRP) agreement Tuesday with Western Municipal Water District (Western), the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) and the Chino Basin Desalter Authority (CDA) to expand and consolidate two existing groundwater recovery incentive agreements. Under the approved LRP, these two projects, yielding 24,600 acre-feet per year (AFY) of water, will merge and expand their yield to 35,200 AFY, setting the stage for further development of a reliable local water supply.

“Metropolitan has a long history of support for groundwater recovery,” said Thomas P. Evans, Western Director and representative for the District on the Metropolitan Board. “This project is an important step toward meeting Met’s targets for development of local, reliable water resources in our region,” added Evans, who also indicated his appreciation of the support of the continued efforts to increase water production in the Chino Basin.

Metropolitan currently has two existing groundwater recovery agreements with Western, IEUA and CDA. The approved expansion will consolidate these two projects into a single LRP agreement, which would be increased from 24,600 AFY to 35,200 AFY. Under the terms of the new agreement, Metropolitan will provide a fixed cost incentive of $139 per acre-foot for a term of 20 years. Shared grant funding would reduce the amount of this incentive if grant funding is obtained to offset costs.

Expanding these projects moves Metropolitan closer to its goal, set in 2007, of securing 174,000 AFY of new, local water supply through LRPs. To date, the Board has approved nine projects producing 63,970 AFY. Consolidation also provides substantial benefits: streamlines project administration, increases accountability and has the potential to provide up to $91 million in incentives to the CDA for developing local supply. Fixed incentives also offer agencies a more stable platform with which to secure bond funding.

“IEUA greatly appreciates the partnership with Metropolitan to recover groundwater in the Chino Basin and make this water available as a drinking supply for our communities,” said Michael Camacho, IEUA’s Board Vice-President and the representative for IEUA on the Metropolitan Board. “Groundwater is one of our most reliable and drought-proof sources of water. This project will also help reduce the pressure on imported water supplies from Northern California.”

The Chino Desalters, which provide the recovered groundwater to Metropolitan under the agreement, create a reliable and affordable supply of local water for Western’s and IEUA’s service areas. They also improve groundwater quality in the Chino Basin, and protect the quality of water heading downstream, benefitting the entire watershed.

“Metropolitan’s support is a critical cornerstone of the CDA’s continuing efforts to expand local water resources,” said Curtis Paxton, Chino Basin Desalter Authority general manager. “The expansion of these incentive agreements will give us additional tools to provide our region with a secure water supply in the years to come.”

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