

September 25, 1998

GOVERNOR WILSON SIGNS HISTORIC \$235 MILLION WATER CONSERVATION, STORAGE BILL

SAN DIEGO, CA — Gov. Pete Wilson today signed a bill that provides \$235 million in state funding that advances key water conservation and storage projects critical to Southern California's water reliability.

SB 1765 provides funding from the current fiscal year's budget to the Department of Water Resources to pay for the lining of the All American and Coachella canals, and construction of conjunctive use storage facilities along the Colorado River Aqueduct.

State funding of these projects was one contingency of a Memorandum of Understanding for a Water Exchange Agreement between the San Diego County Water Authority and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). This agreement will help implement a Water Transfer Agreement between the Authority and the Imperial Irrigation District (IID).

"We've made great strides toward enhancing the reliability of San Diego County's water supply, and now we have the means to bring the water here," said Christine Frahm, chairwoman of the San Diego County Water Authority. "It's also important that the benefits of the bill extend well beyond our area. It significantly enhances the water supply throughout the entire state," she said.

"The state's investment in California's largest water conservation project will yield enormous dividends," said John V. Foley, MWD chairman. "These funds will help resolve 50 years of conflict with other states in the Colorado River Basin, secure a reliable water supply for Southern California for up to 30 years, and help relieve pressure on Northern California's Bay-Delta."

Separate from the 200,000 acre-foot Imperial Valley transfer, the lining of the earthen canals will save an estimated 94,000 acre-feet of water each year now lost to seepage. The conjunctive use storage projects along Metropolitan's Colorado River Aqueduct would allow MWD to take delivery of and store Colorado River water in surplus years and draw upon it in dry years.

The bill was authored by state Senator Steve Peace (D-El Cajon) and sponsored by the entire San Diego legislative delegation, as well as representatives from Los Angeles area, the Central Valley and San Francisco. It was approved August 31 by the Assembly, 64-5, and the Senate, 33-3.

The Authority signed an agreement April 29 to buy up to 200,000 acre-feet of water annually from the Imperial Irrigation District for up to 75 years. This is the largest long-term water transfer in United States history. The water will be made available through on-farm conservation measures. One contingency of the agreement was that the Authority needed to secure conveyance for the conserved water.

On August 12, MWD and the Authority approved a Memorandum of Understanding on a precedent-setting water-exchange agreement. Through this agreement, the Authority will deliver to MWD water the Authority receives from IID, in exchange for MWD's delivery to the Authority of the same amount of water of at least equal quality.

The canal linings, conjunctive use storage facilities and the Authority-IID water transfer are key components of the California 4.4 plan which contains projects that, once implemented, will help the state live within its basic apportionment of 4.4 million acre-feet of Colorado River water. In recent years, California has used more than 5.2 million acre-feet of the river water annually. Until 1995, California was able to exceed its 4.4 million acre-foot basic apportionment by using the apportioned, but unused, supplies of Arizona and Nevada.

Since 1996, California has been able to exceed its basic apportionment only through declared surpluses on the river. The Secretary of the Interior, however, has indicated he will not allow continued surplus declaration unless the state has a plan on how it will reduce its usage to its 4.4 million acre-feet entitlement. The California 4.4 Plan was designed to accomplish the reduction.

The San Diego County Water Authority is a public agency that works through its 24 member agencies to provide a safe, reliable water supply to more than 2.8 million San Diego County residents.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a consortium comprised of 27 cities and water agencies servicing 16 million people in six counties.

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