

## **MWD Officials Praise Legislative Leaders for \$235 Million State Appropriation**

September 1, 1998 -- Officials of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California today praised state legislative leaders for passage of a last-minute, \$235 million appropriation that will help launch the largest water conservation project in California history.

"We are especially grateful to Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, Senate President Pro Tem John Burton, Gov. Pete Wilson and the legislative leaders of both parties who worked so hard to make this a bipartisan success that will benefit all California water users, north and south, in the cities and on the farms," said MWD Chairman John V. Foley.

Overwhelmingly supported by both the state Senate and Assembly on the last day of the legislative session Monday, SB 1765 appropriates funding for canal-lining and groundwater storage projects along the Colorado River. Authored by state Sen. Steve Peace (D-El Cajon), the bill, which also appropriates funding for additional environmental studies of the Salton Sea, has been sent to Gov. Wilson for his expected signature.

The state appropriation clears the first hurdle for a 30-year exchange agreement between Metropolitan and the San Diego County Water Authority. Forged last month, the MWD-San Diego deal includes a transfer of 200,000 acre-feet of conserved agricultural water from the Imperial Valley to the Southland's urbanized coastal plain that could help keep Metropolitan's Colorado River Aqueduct full for up to 30 years. An acre-foot is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount of water used by two typical Southland families in and around their homes in a year.

The MWD-San Diego pact, canal lining and groundwater storage projects have been identified as critical components of the California 4.4 Plan to reduce the state's future reliance on Colorado River water. U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and the six other Colorado River basin states have challenged California to come up with a comprehensive plan to live within its 4.4 million acre-foot allotment from the river. "Passage of this bill truly is a vote for the environment," Foley said. "It helps meet all the objectives that environmentalists and other water policy experts have been advocating for years; from agricultural water conservation and canal lining to reductions in Southern California water demands and better management of natural resources.

"The appropriation also benefits Northern California by helping Southern California reduce its reliance on water supplies from the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during droughts. This may help facilitate a long-term plan to protect the Bay-Delta and restore the state's depleted wetlands," Foley said.

SB 1765 appropriates \$200 million to concrete-line portions of the All American Canal and its Coachella branch, with another \$35 million to fund groundwater storage projects along MWD's Colorado River Aqueduct. The bill also provides \$300,000 to help fund additional environmental studies of the Salton Sea.

Separate from the 200,000 acre-foot Imperial Valley transfer, the lining of the earthen canals, which deliver Colorado River water to the Imperial and Coachella valleys, is projected to save up to 94,000 acre-feet of water a year that otherwise would have been lost to seepage. That saved water is expected to be used to settle long-standing issues among Colorado River parties, including Metropolitan, agricultural interests in the Coachella and Imperial valleys, and the San Luis Rey Indians.

Funding for the canal-lining and groundwater storage projects was originally part of the proposed \$1.7 billion water bond, which failed to receive the necessary legislative support last week to be placed on the November ballot. Sen. Peace kept the Colorado River funding alive by inserting it into SB 1765.

The Metropolitan Water District is a regional water agency that imports water from Northern California and the Colorado River, and delivers it on a wholesale basis to the coastal plain of Southern California. Through its 27 member public agencies, the district provides almost 60 percent of the water used by nearly 16 million people living in portions of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties.

Comments or Questions - send email to Garry Hofer, Acting Director, Media Outreach  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California  
P.O. Box 54153  
Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153