

**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
UPPER SAN GABRIEL VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
602 E. HUNTINGTON DRIVE, SUITE B, MONROVIA, CA 91016
8:00 A.M. – FEBRUARY 23, 2022**

**SPECIAL NOTICE
Teleconference Accessibility**

Pursuant to the newly adopted provisions of the Brown Act and consistent with the Board's Resolution ratifying the declaration of a state of emergency by the State of California in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Upper District will hold the public hearing and its board meeting via teleconference or the most rapid means of communication available at the time. Instructions to participate in the teleconference are below:

Zoom Meeting Link
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84200523006>

Meeting ID: 842 0052 3006

Telephone Dial:
1 (669) 900-6833 US

Meeting ID: 842 0052 3006

Public comments may be made through teleconference when prompted by the President during the public comment period. Public comments may also be provided by emailing venessa@usqvmwd.org in advance of the meeting. Please indicate "PUBLIC COMMENT" in the subject line.

*If you have difficulty connecting to the teleconference line, please call (626) 443-2297 or email ruben@usqvmwd.org. **It may take a few minutes to join Zoom or connect via telephone so please join early.***

AGENDA

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. ROLL CALL OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS
3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA [1]
4. PUBLIC COMMENT
Anyone wishing to discuss items should do so now. A three-minute time limit on remarks is requested.
5. CONSENT CALENDAR [1]
 - (a) Minutes of a regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on February 9, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.
6. ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS [1]
 - (a) City of South Pasadena Application for MWD's Stormwater Pilot Program Funding

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors approve the City of South Pasadena's application to Metropolitan Water District's Stormwater Pilot Program and authorize the General Manager to execute an agreement with MWD and City of South Pasadena for a program funding amount not-to-exceed \$500,000, with a required 1:1 funding match.

- (b) Workshop Regarding Upper District's 2020 Census/Redistricting Plan and Map Review
(Staff will provide a presentation at the meeting.)

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors consider this matter and direct staff accordingly.

7. INFORMATION ITEMS (These items are for the information of the Board of Directors and require no action) [2]
 - (a) Press Releases and News Articles.
8. ATTORNEY'S REPORT [2]
9. ENGINEER'S REPORT [2]
10. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT [2]
11. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS [2]
12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS [1]
13. ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION – None.
14. ADJOURNMENT - To a regular meeting of the Board of Directors to be held on March 9, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. via teleconference or the most rapid means of communication available at the time.

LEGEND: [1] INDICATES ACTION ANTICIPATED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON THIS ITEM
[2] INDICATES INFORMATION ITEM - NO BOARD ACTION NECESSARY

PRESIDENT ED CHAVEZ, PRESIDING

American Disabilities Act Compliance (*Government Code Section 54954.2(a)*)



To request special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Upper District office at (626) 443-2297 or venessa@usgvmwd.org at least 24 hours prior to meeting.



**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE UPPER SAN GABRIEL VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
602 E. HUNTINGTON DRIVE, SUITE B, MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA 91016
8:00 A.M. – February 9, 2022**

Pursuant to the newly adopted provisions of the Brown Act and consistent with the Board's resolution ratifying the declaration of a state of emergency by the State of California in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Upper District held a regular meeting of the Board of Directors via zoom teleconference on February 9, 2022, at the hour of 8:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Chavez, Santana, Treviño, Garcia and Fellow.

DIRECTORS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Tom Love, General Manager; Martin Koczanowicz, District Counsel; Jenny Savron, Consulting Engineer; Evelyn Rodriguez, Director of Finance and Administration; Patty Cortez, Director of Government and Community Affairs; Venessa Navarrette, Executive Assistant; Ruben Gallegos, Project Assistant; and Jennifer Aguilar, Water Use Efficiency Analyst.

OTHERS PRESENT

Anteneh Tesfaye, Anthony Alberti, Cris Fealy, Cynthia Sternquist, Dan Arrighi, Dave Michalko, David Muse, Ted Gerber, Jared Macias, Javier Vargas, Jazmin Lopez, Jeff Helsley, Jorge Marquez, Lynda Noriega, Paul Zampielo, Roy Frausto, Stephanie Moreno, Tara Robinson, Lenet Pacheco, Jose Martinez and Tony Zampielo.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

On motion by Secretary Garcia, seconded by Director Fellow, the agenda was adopted by the following roll call vote:

FELLOW: AYE
TREVIÑO: AYE
GARCIA: AYE
SANTANA: AYE
CHAVEZ: AYE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cynthia Sternquist, Mayor Pro Tem for Temple City, and the General Manager discussed the next public hearing currently scheduled to be held on Wednesday, February 23rd.

Ms. Sternquist requested for a short discussion of public comments received regarding redistricting. Legal Counsel stated that extensive board discussion of an item not included in the current agenda would be a violation of the Brown Act.

The General Manager clarified that public comments regarding the redistricting item have been and will continue to be received up until the morning of the district's next public hearing.

The Executive Assistant read into record the public comments submitted by the following persons in advance of the board meeting. Copies of the written comments are also included as Attachment 2 to the minutes.

- Brian Cook, City Manager of Temple City, requesting to keep the current district boundaries.
- Cynthia Sternquist, Mayor Pro Tem for Temple City, requesting to keep the current district boundaries.

- Johanna Bennet, resident of Temple City, requesting to keep the current district boundaries.
- Sho Tay, Mayor for the City of Arcadia, requesting to keep the current district boundaries.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Next scheduled committee meeting dates are as follows:

- (a) Administration and Finance – March 1, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.
- (b) Water Resources and Facility Management – March 2, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.
- (c) Government Affairs and Community Outreach – March 7, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Director Fellow moved to approve Consent Calendar items (a) through (h). Director Garcia seconded the motion, which was approved by the following roll call vote:

FELLOW: AYE
TREVIÑO: AYE
GARCIA: AYE
SANTANA: AYE
CHAVEZ: AYE

- (a) Minutes of a public hearing and regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on January 26, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.
- (b) List of Demands
- (c) Financial Reports – December 2021
 - 1. Financial Statements
 - 2. Quarterly Report on Investments
 - 3. Director's Public Outreach
- (d) Resolution No. 02-22-633, Re-ratifying the Proclamation of a State of Emergency by Governor Newsom and Reauthorizing Remote Teleconference Meetings.
- (e) Execution of Negotiated Tax Exchange Resolution from Annexation of Petition No. 14-221 to County Lighting Maintenance District 1687.
- (f) Amendment of professional services agreement with Accent Computer Solutions, Inc., for information technology (IT) management and support services, extending the term of the agreement to December 31, 2023, and increasing the amount payable by \$100,000 for an overall contract amount not-to-exceed \$400,000.
- (g) Amendment of professional services agreement with Rogers, Anderson, Malody & Scott, LLP, to provide financial audit service for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2022 and 2023, and increasing the amount payable by \$59,970 for an overall contract amount not-to-exceed \$148,040.
- (h) Amendment of professional services agreement with Willdan Financial Services, to provide standby charge administration service for fiscal years ending 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 and increasing the amount payable by \$54,600 for a total amount not-to-exceed \$108,100.

AWARD OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR UPPER DISTRICT'S TENANT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The General Manager provided a brief background on the rebid process and staff's evaluation of the bids, along with the architect and District Counsel's review.

Treasurer Treviño moved to approve the Water Resources and Facility Management Committee's recommendation to:

1. Accept the bid submitted by the lowest responsive bidder, Marjani Builders, Inc., in the amount of \$3,160,000.00 and authorize the General Manager to execute a contract and Notice to Proceed, subject to District Counsel review, to perform the required work; and,
2. Authorize the General Manager to file a Notice of Exemption under CEQA as a categorical exemption for existing facilities.

President Chavez seconded the motion which was approved by the following roll call vote:

FELLOW: AYE
TREVIÑO: AYE
GARCIA: AYE
SANTANA: AYE
CHAVEZ: AYE

INFORMATION ITEMS

The following items listed on the agenda for the information of the Board were read and ordered received and filed:

- (a) Press Releases and News Articles

ATTORNEY'S REPORT

District Counsel reported working on compliance letters for the district's Water Smart Home Program as well as assisting staff with email correspondence and architect evaluation for the tenant improvement project.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Jenny Savron provided a report on hydrologic conditions, basin deliveries, reservoir storage, and rainfall averages. She reported that the Baldwin Park Key Well groundwater elevation has dropped to 182.2 feet as of February 4, 2022, unchanged from the prior week.

She reported that there were no deliveries made in the month of January through USG-3. However, through the San Gabriel Water District pipeline, 2,133 AF of water was delivered to the San Gabriel and Azusa Canyons. She stated that no wells were shut down due to contamination during this time.

The following is a summary of contamination ranges found in samples under Title 22 from 18 wells during December 2021.

<u>Contaminant</u>	<u>Range (ppb)</u>	<u>MCL (ppb)</u>
PCE	ND – 1.1	5*
TCE	ND	5*

A detailed written report was also provided to the Board.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The General Manager reported that the Department of Water Resources increased the State Water Project (SWP) allocation from 0% to 15%. He stated that Metropolitan Water District (Metropolitan) will now review any SWP dependent member agency demands, adding that the additional allocation should carry us through to the end of the calendar year, along with conservation efforts.

He reported on the recent actions taken by Metropolitan's board: 1) approval of an agreement with the State Water Contractors Association for additional transfers; 2) approval of an engineering analysis on some conveyance system improvements that would primarily benefit the City of Los Angeles, Las Virgenes Water District and Calleguas Water District; and 3) approval for the Reverse Cyclic Program, allowing deferral of deliveries to groundwater basins and purchase of water at the current year's rate. He added that under the program, Metropolitan would also make provisions to make water deliveries to maintain basin levels above critical levels.

The General Manager reported that at the producer meeting, staff will provide an update on Metropolitan's proposed budget and rates and that Metropolitan staff will provide a water supply update.

He also congratulated two Upper District staff members for celebrating five years with the agency and commended them for their work.

A General Manager's report was provided in the Board's agenda packet.

METROPOLITAN REPORT

Director Fellow reported that Metropolitan's board received the findings of the Shaw Group and that he will update Upper District when further details become available.

He shared the defeat Chairwoman Gloria Gray experienced with Metropolitan's board when they opposed her committee restructure and appointments. He stated that he believes she will continue pursuing these restructuring efforts and expressed his support for the Chairwoman.

A Metropolitan summary report was provided in the Board's agenda packet.

WATER QUALITY AUTHORITY REPORT

President Chavez reported that the Water Quality Authority kept the same slate of officers.

A Water Quality Authority report was provided in the Board's agenda packet.

WATERMASTER REPORT

A Watermaster summary report was provided in the Board's agenda packet.

AB 1234 COMPLIANCE REPORT

A summary report was provided in the Board's agenda packet.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Director Fellow congratulated the administrative staff members that celebrated five years of service with the district.

Secretary Garcia echoed Director Fellow in congratulating Upper District's administrative staff members. She then expressed her disappointment towards Metropolitan board members' opposition of Chairwoman Gray's committee restructuring and appointments. Secretary Garcia stated her support for Chairwoman Gray.

Treasurer Treviño shared his concern about residents potentially paying a higher rate for imported water. Although he recognized the momentum Metropolitan's opposition may have created, providing consistent water supply at a modest rate for taxpayers should remain the guidepost for any conclusive decisions.

Vice President Santana expressed her concern on how Metropolitan will address the unprecedented low water supply, rate increments and climate change that impact ratepayers. She also expressed her disappointment towards MWD Board's opposition to Chairwoman Gray's committee appointments. She then commended Director Fellow for his representation and dedication to Metropolitan's board.

Treasurer Treviño provided a brief background on the efforts that culminated in the creation of two new committees at Metropolitan and an independent investigation.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

President Chavez asked if there were other business to come before the Board. There being none, the meeting was duly adjourned to a regular meeting of the Board of Directors to be held on February 23, 2022, at 8:00 a.m. via teleconference or the most rapid means of communication available at the time.

ATTEST

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

SEAL

DRAFT

Attachment 1
Consent Item 6 (b)
February 9, 2022

Demands numbered 21424 through 21450 on the General Fund Account of the Upper District at Citizens Business Bank, in the amount of \$480,905.98 and demands numbered 1018 through 1021 on the Water Fund Account at the same bank in the amount of \$22,165,393.96.

21424	San Gabriel Mission Elementary School	Inv. GRNT 21-22, Water Education Grant FY 2021-22 <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>		975.00
21425	San Gabriel Mission Elementary School	Inv. GRNT 21-22A, Water Education Grant FY 2021-22 <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>		670.00
21426	Upper District Revolving Payroll Fund	Inv. NOV21, Reimbursement for Payroll and Payroll Taxes for Employees <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>		120,677.97
21427	U.S. Bank Corporate Payment System	Inv. DEC 21CT, Cal Card Charges through 11/22/21 <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>		1,465.66
21428	Anthony Fellow	Director's Compensation, November 2021 4 Days District Business 4 Days MWD Business Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance Less Deferred Comp. Less Taxes Withheld <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>	1,020.00 1,020.00 516.87 (500.00) <u>(920.55)</u>	1,136.32
21429	Anthony Fellow	Director's Compensation, December 2021 7 Days District Business 3 Days MWD Business Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance Less Deferred Comp. Less Taxes Withheld <i>(Previously Paid 01/12/22)</i>	1,785.00 765.00 516.87 (500.00) <u>(1,021.79)</u>	1,545.08
21430	Ecotech Services, Inc.	Inv. 2113, Water Bottle Fill Station <i>(Board approved 08/07/18. Previously Paid 02/01/22)</i>		42,000.00
21431	Accent Computer Solutions, Inc.	Inv. 149653, IT Management Support, February 2022 <i>(Board approved 10/06/15)</i>		2,876.30
21432	ACI Consulting Corporation	Inv. SQ-000210, Sage Subscription Renewal through 02/26/23		3,070.24
21433	ACWA/JPIA	Inv.0679848, Health Insurance Premium - February 2022		29,404.70
21434	Best Best & Krieger, LLP	Inv. 923602, Lobbying Services through December 31, 2021 <i>(Board approved 12/09/20)</i>		7,500.00
21435	Civic Publications	Inv. 1701, 2020-2021 Annual Report		6,061.00
21436	Ecotech Services, Inc.	Inv. 2153, Water Bottle Fill Station Inv. 2168, Water Smart Home Program <i>(Board approved 08/07/18)</i>	3,000.00 <u>20,092.00</u>	23,092.00
21437	Foothill Technology Center, LLC	Inv. MAR 22LEA, Office Lease - March 2022 <i>(Board approved 04/09/11)</i>		20,751.00
21438	Joey C. Soto	Inv. UD #86, Grant Writing Services, December 2021 <i>(Board approved 08/04/15)</i>		1,072.50
21439	Land's End Business Outfitters	Inv. SIN9771271, District Logo Items		119.98
21440	Olivarez Madruga Lemieux & O'Neill	Professional Services, December 2021 Inv. 325.001-17796, Transactional Fees Inv. 325.996-17797, Transactional Fees Inv. 325.999-17798, Retainer <i>(Board Approved 05/17/11)</i>	140.00 6,708.50 <u>4,064.00</u>	10,912.50
21441	Stetson Engineers, Inc.	Inv. 2533-189, General Engineering Support Services, December 2021 Inv. 2728-021, Integrated Resources Plan Update, December 2021	27,962.18 <u>1,879.75</u>	29,841.93
21442	Upper District Revolving Payroll Fund	Inv. DEC 21, Reimbursement for Payroll and Payroll Taxes for Employees Inv. DEC 21D-A, Reimbursement for Payroll Taxes for Directors Inv. DEC 21D-B, Reimbursement for Payroll Taxes for Directors	126,871.38 6,717.48 <u>4,449.06</u>	138,037.92

21443	Upper District Revolving Fund	Replenish Revolving Fund Account - January 2022		
		Office Supplies	274.30	
		Computer Systems/Equipment/Maintenance/Insurance/Outside Service	1,245.86	
		Director's Outreach	300.00	
		Meeting/Travel/Conferences/Dues/Assessments/Membership	18.48	
		Telephone/Utilities/Building Maintenance	1,556.29	
		Water Conservation Program Expenses	1,418.99	
		WRP Operation and Maintenance	1,533.68	
		Medical/ODA Reimbursement/Processing Fee/Retirement Plan/Overdeposit	9,431.80	15,779.40
21444	U.S. Bank Corporate Payment System	CalCard Charges through 01/24/21		
		Meetings, Travel, Conferences	907.13	
		Computer Systems/Office Equipment/Supplies/Maintenance & Service/Utilities	2,579.12	
		Conservation Program Expenses, Education and Outreach	429.95	3,916.20
21445	Willdan Financial Services	Inv. 010-50257, FY 21-22 Services Rendered through December 2021		13,332.62
21446	Jennifer Santana	Director's Compensation, December 2021		
		6 Days District Business	1,530.00	
		Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance	516.87	
		Less Deferred Comp.	(500.00)	
		Less Taxes Withheld	(205.62)	1,341.25
21447	Edward L. Chavez	Director's Compensation, January 2022		
		10 Days District Business	2,550.00	
		Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance	516.87	
		Less Deferred Comp.	(1,617.00)	
		Less Taxes Withheld	(922.78)	527.09
21448	Charles M. Treviño	Director's Compensation, January 2022		
		10 Days District Business	2,550.00	
		Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance	453.70	
		Less Deferred Comp.	(500.00)	
		Less Taxes Withheld	(539.01)	1,964.69
21449	Jennifer Santana	Director's Compensation, January 2022		
		6 Days District Business	1,530.00	
		Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance	516.87	
		Less Deferred Comp.	(500.00)	
		Less Taxes Withheld	(205.62)	1,341.25
21450	Katarina M. Garcia	Director's Compensation, January 2022		
		7 Days District Business	1,785.00	
		Meeting/Travel Expenses/Allowance	516.87	
		Less Deferred Comp.	(500.00)	
		Less Taxes Withheld	(308.49)	1,493.38
		TOTAL		\$ 480,905.98
1018	City of Industry City Hall	Invoice No. DEC-21, Purchase of 14.3 AF of Recycled Water in December 2021		4,247.10
1019	Metropolitan Water District	Invoice No. 10661, Purchase of 242.3 AF of Treated Water and 28,187.7 AF of Untreated Water in December 2021		22,141,377.10
1020	San Gabriel Valley MWD	Invoice No. 536, 90.51 AF of Water Delivered through the Alhambra/MWD Exchange Agreement in December 2021 @ \$200 per AF		18,102.00
1021	Suburban Water System	Invoice No. 6666, Phase IIB Normal Operating Charge, January 2022		1,667.76
		TOTAL		\$22,165,393.96

Venessa Navarrette

From: Bryan Cook <bcook@templecity.us>
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 1:25 PM
To: Venessa Navarrette; Ruben Gallegos
Subject: Temple City comment regarding February 9th - Public Hearing item Census/Redistricting

Honorable Board Members,

I respectfully write to you again on behalf of the City of Temple City regarding the public hearing item on your February 9th agenda regarding redistricting for the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Board seats.

The City of Temple City would like to respectfully reiterate that we have had a long history of being represented by current district boundaries with both common and diverse communities of interest. Therefore, maintaining the current district boundaries as currently configured will provide both continuity and keep intact long-standing stakeholder relationships and collaboration on issues of City-wide and region-wide significance.

Sincerely,

Bryan Cook
City Manager
City of Temple City

DRAFT

Venessa Navarrette

From: Cynthia Sternquist <csternquist@templecity.us>
Sent: Sunday, February 6, 2022 6:39 PM
To: Venessa Navarrette
Cc: Charles Trevino
Subject: Public comment/redistricting

Dear Honorable Directors,

I am writing to ask that you vote to keep the current maps in place. The data that was presented supports the argument that no changes are needed and that to do so would be a waste of taxpayers time and money. Hiring a demographer could cost an excess of \$50,000 that could be utilized in enhancing current outreach programs for all cities that would help support the efforts of the District in its water conservation efforts. As this is the second public hearing, I am hopeful that there will be a discussion on the issue and a vote will be taken to leave the current map in place and make no changes.

Thank you for your consideration and service to our communities.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Sternquist
Mayor Pro-tem

DRAFT

From: Johanna Bennett <josie@pacbell.net>

Date: February 8, 2022 at 1:50:04 PM PST

To: venessa@usgymwd.org

Subject: Water district

My name is Johanna Bennett. I am a 44 year resident of Temple City.

I am writing to you to ask you to keep the current map in place that serves upper district residents. In these challenging financial times, I believe it would be irresponsible for the upper district to pay an excess of \$60,000 for a demographer to produce a new map or even have the result of keeping the same map. There would also have to be more public hearings, which have been difficult to find information on, and rush to get those in place before a deadline date sometime in April. The current map in place meets all demographic requirements so why would the district want to expand funds to change what is already working?

Thank you for your time,

Johanna Bennett
1655 Camellia Ave.
Temple City, CA

DRAFT

Venessa Navarrette

From: Sho Tay <stay@arcadiaca.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 4:40 PM
To: Venessa Navarrette
Subject: UPPER SAN GABRIEL VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT Boundaries

Dear directors, Fellow, Chavez, Garcia, Santana and Trevino:

I am writing to you in support of keeping the current water districts boundaries as they currently are.

The City of Arcadia is currently going through the redistricting process which caused much confusion and concern with our residents. One of the reason we need to redistricting is because the pollution deviation between the largest and smallest district cannot exceed 10% per Federal Voting Rights Act requirements.

USGVMWD GM reported that the population change between divisions resulted in the average standard deviation decreasing from 2.9% in 2010 to 2.2% in 2020. He explained that this equates to the divisions being more equal in terms of population size at this time. The GM also shared that the current regulations require that the standard deviation be less than 10%, which makes the need to redistrict any of the divisions unwarranted.

Board Legal Counsel also reported that the current Upper District boundaries meet both state and federal legislation and are fully defensible.

It would be irresponsible to waste money on something that is unnecessary. That money could be better used to enhance the Districts water conservation education programs.

Sincerely,

Sho Tay
Mayor | City of Arcadia
240 W. Huntington Dr. | Arcadia, CA 91007
(626) 574-5403 | STay@ArcadiaCA.Gov

MEMORANDUM



ITEM 6. (a)

DATE: February 17, 2022
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: General Manager
SUBJECT: MWD's Stormwater Pilot Program Funding – South Pasadena

Recommendation

Approve the City of South Pasadena's application to Metropolitan Water District's Stormwater Pilot Program and authorize the General Manager to execute an agreement with MWD and South Pasadena for a program funding amount not-to-exceed \$500,000, with a required 1:1 funding match.

Background

In early 2020, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) expanded its efforts to learn more about the water supply potential of local stormwater capture with a new \$7.5 million pilot program. The goal of Metropolitan's stormwater programs is to help evaluate the water supply potential of local stormwater capture. The Stormwater for Direct Use Pilot Program and Stormwater for Recharge Pilot Program fund construction of new direct-use stormwater capture projects and stormwater recharge projects as well as the installation of monitoring equipment on existing projects. Direct-use projects capture local rainfall and stormwater runoff. The captured water is typically stored in an underground cistern and used to meet non-potable demands. Stormwater recharge projects capture stormwater for groundwater recharge and future production.

The pilot program will fund up to \$1 million in costs for new projects, including construction, installation of monitoring equipment and production of monitoring reports. Existing projects will receive up to \$500,000 for installation of monitoring equipment and production of monitoring reports.

Summary

The City of Pasadena has submitted a project for consideration under Metropolitan's Stormwater for Direct Use Pilot Program. The project titled the South Pasadena City Hall Stormwater Capture Project, will capture stormwater runoff from the parking lot areas located at City Hall. The captured stormwater will be treated with a sediment separator and stored in underground cisterns and used for landscape irrigation. Excess stormwater will be diverted to a nearby sanitary sewer. In addition to the water supply benefits this project will comply with the MS4 permit requirements for the City.

Chairwoman Gloria Gray and The Politics of Water

By Danny Bakewell Jr. Executive Editor

Published February 16, 2022



Gloria Gray (file photo)

Despite a career of fighting for diversity and inclusion, the two-term chairwoman finds herself facing unwarranted challenges and accusations.

Gloria Gray is the first African American woman ever elected chairperson of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and in fact, only the second woman ever elected chair in MWD's 90+ years of existence. The extremely influential and powerful board represents six Southern California counties and serves over 19 million customers throughout the region.

But, after an almost two-year battle to put forth an executive committee, Gloria Gray finds herself in the unfamiliar place of being accused of not appointing a board that is diverse or inclusive enough to be approved.

ADVERTISEMENT

One of the MWD chairperson's duties is to appoint chairs and vice chairs of all of the committees that are responsible to research, review and make recommendations to the 38-member governing board. However, despite a responsibility which has traditionally been perfunctory, Gloria Gray has found herself in a battle to appoint the individuals she would like to serve in these roles.

"My slate has not only been rejected by a small group of the board's members, but also has been voted down twice," said Chairperson Gray.

While Gray is proud of the slate of leaders that she has brought forward, she is finding the process to be very frustrating because she is enduring far less amicable circumstances than any previous chairperson has had to withstand.

The process is far more complicated than just having a majority of the members approve her recommendation. Because of a weighted process for securing board approval, some member's votes weigh much more than others.

Gray's recommendations were approved with over 70% of the members voting in favor, but a small group of board members, who represent the larger part of the region, are voting against Gray's recommendations. As a result, her recommendations have been voted down, despite receiving 26 YES votes to 12 NO votes.

What is more concerning is that earlier this year, the MWD board agreed to create three new committees – 1) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2) Underserved Communities and 3) Imported Water. However, because these are new committees, the failure of the board to approve leadership for these committees renders these committees inactive and unable to function.

This contentious denial of leadership has garnered attention from both the state and regional NAACP offices. Referring to the MWD board, Darrell Goode, president of the NAACP Santa Monica-Venice Branch, said that the chairwoman appears to be "subject to some questionable and or challenging racial biases."



(File photo)

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Goode stated, "It has been brought to our attention that there may be some biases or prejudice or even racially motivated attitudes towards the chairwoman."

Gray, in defending her agenda and her slate of appointees, said, "When you look at the overall makeup of the board, my committee appointments are far more diverse than the board itself."

The MWD Board is made up of 63% male, 37% female and 42% people of color. However, Gray's executive committee as recommended would be 55% male, 45% female and 40% people of color and that does not include the two people of color who refused to serve on committees, which would have significantly increased the percentage of people of color.

Looking at the history of MWD's Executive committees, despite what her critics say, Gray's nominations would produce the most diverse executive committee that board has ever had. But, despite this fact, her colleagues are claiming to not approve Gray's recommendations because of its "lack of diversity."

Gray says that in all of her years of serving on the board, she has never witnessed a chairperson's nominations being treated with so much dissent. She insists that her appointments don't affect the board's ability to legislate and that it does not in any way take away their voting power.

She wonders, "Why am I being treated differently than any of the other board chairs in the history of the board?"

Gloria Gray stands by her record and says she has always been an advocate of community issues. She says that the past three years and her second term have been very challenging. Also, a number of obstacles have been placed in her way in a manner that has never been done in the board's nearly 100-year history.

"When I was elected, I pledged to fight for critical issues for water in underserved communities and throughout the state," Gray says. However, "petty political" battles have undermined her ability to address these issues.

The opposition has not proposed an alternative slate, even though Gray says she collaborated with over 90% of the board to create the slate that she nominated. But, despite her desire to

work in partnership with the board, each time she has proposed a slate, the opposition has shot it down.

Several of the opponents of her executive committee slate ran against Gray for chair and since they were unsuccessful in defeating her, it appears they are playing a vindictive brand of politics.

Despite what appears to be outside of political protocols, Gray's nominations even drew comments from Councilwoman Sylvia Ballin, a former member of the board who voted against Gray's original slate.

After leaving the board, the Councilwoman wrote a letter to Gray alleging her recommendations were not diverse enough and encouraged her to withdraw the nominations. However, Ballin did not share any advice or guidance as to how these recommendations could ultimately be approved.

Adan Ortega, Ballin's replacement on the MWD board, followed suit and voted against Gray's second round of nominations. Gray said she did respond to the Ballin's letter, but as of Sentinel press time, we have not received or seen that response letter.

The real question is why would this small group of members want to block opportunities for advancement and diversity. That answer and a solution to this crisis is still to be written, but we will all wait to see.

Categories: **Uncategorized**

Tags: **Adan Ortega** | **Councilwoman Sylvia Ballin** | **Gloria Gray** | **Metropolitan Water District** | **NAACP offices** | **The MWD Board**

© 2022 **Los Angeles Sentinel** All Rights Reserved • A Bakewell Media Publication

About • **Archives** • **Contact Us** • **Corrections & Misprints** • **Media Kit**

Terms of Service • **Privacy Policy**

LA Watts Times • **Taste of Soul**

ENVIRONMENT

Why the cost of water in San Diego has blown past L.A., according to a new report



A December 2014 aerial view of the San Vicente Dam and reservoir. (John Gibbins/San Diego Union-Tribune)

Critics question costly investments in desalination given declining consumer demand. Supporters say long-term investments will bolster the region against future drought.

BY JOSHUA EMERSON SMITH

FEB. 12, 2022 5 AM PT



San Diego is at the end of the pipeline when it comes to importing water from the Colorado River and the Sacramento Bay Delta. So it's no surprise its costs have exceeded those of Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California.

However, a recent report from a leading expert finds there's more behind the [skyrocketing price of water](#) in the San Diego region, which over the last decade has seen wholesale rates increasingly outpace neighbors to the north.

Plummeting demand coupled with a bevy of costly projects — from raising dams to a desalination plant in Carlsbad — created a perfect storm that sent water rates soaring over the last decade, according to a [recent analysis](#) by longtime environmental economist Michael Hanemann of Arizona State University.

Hanemann doesn't fault the San Diego County Water Authority for its investments. He said the strategy of the wholesaler, which serves [24 retail agencies](#), would look more prudent today had demand not unexpectedly fallen by 40 percent since 2010.

Over the last decade multiple droughts in California have triggered mandatory conservation coupled with a widely successful turf-rebate program. Demand across the state has decreased dramatically. Most agencies didn't see it coming.

As a result of selling less water, the Water Authority has had to [hike rates](#) to cover its annual expenses — nearly 90 percent of which are fixed costs, including payments on \$21 billion in debt, according to the report.

“This infrastructure will get used,” Hanemann said. “Maybe it won't get used as much as expected this decade, but three decades from now, it will be used. The problem is timing.”

The Water Authority — which declined an interview request for this story — has maintained that its investments were wise and ensure the region isn't faced with crippling shortages during drought.

\$400 a month for a lawn

Critics have countered that the agency has, to its own detriment, ignored the [plight of farmers](#) and cash-strapped residents who are often more sensitive to cost than mandatory cutbacks. Now the region's high prices are likely driving increased conservation, and vice versa.

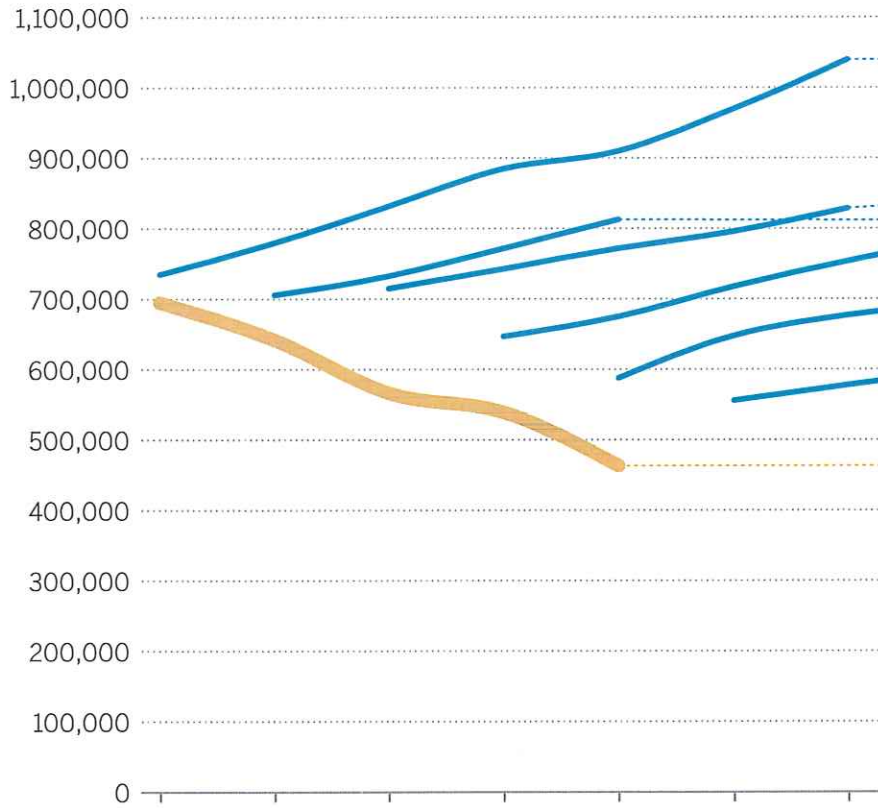
“Everyone missed that price has an impact on demands,” said Jack Bebee, general manager of Fallbrook Public Utility District. “Eventually, there's a point where people say, '\$400 a month for a lawn isn't worth it.' That's still being overlooked.”

The Water Authority has repeatedly overestimated demand since 1995 — initially predicting regionwide water use would reach 970,000 acre feet by 2020. Today, the region is using about half that, around 450,000 acre feet, down from a peak of roughly 700,000 acre feet in 2007.

Water Authority repeatedly overestimated water demand

Chart shows actual water demand for the San Diego region compared to agency projections drafted every five years.

All figures are in acre-feet



Historical water demand in San Diego County

All figures are in acre-feet.



Note: The Water Authority's fiscal year begins on July 1.

Source: San Diego County Water Authority

Karthika Namboothiri / The San Diego Union-Tribune

Those skeptical of the Water Authority have questioned whether the agency overbuilt its system in a somewhat misguided effort to insulate itself from the L.A.-based Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

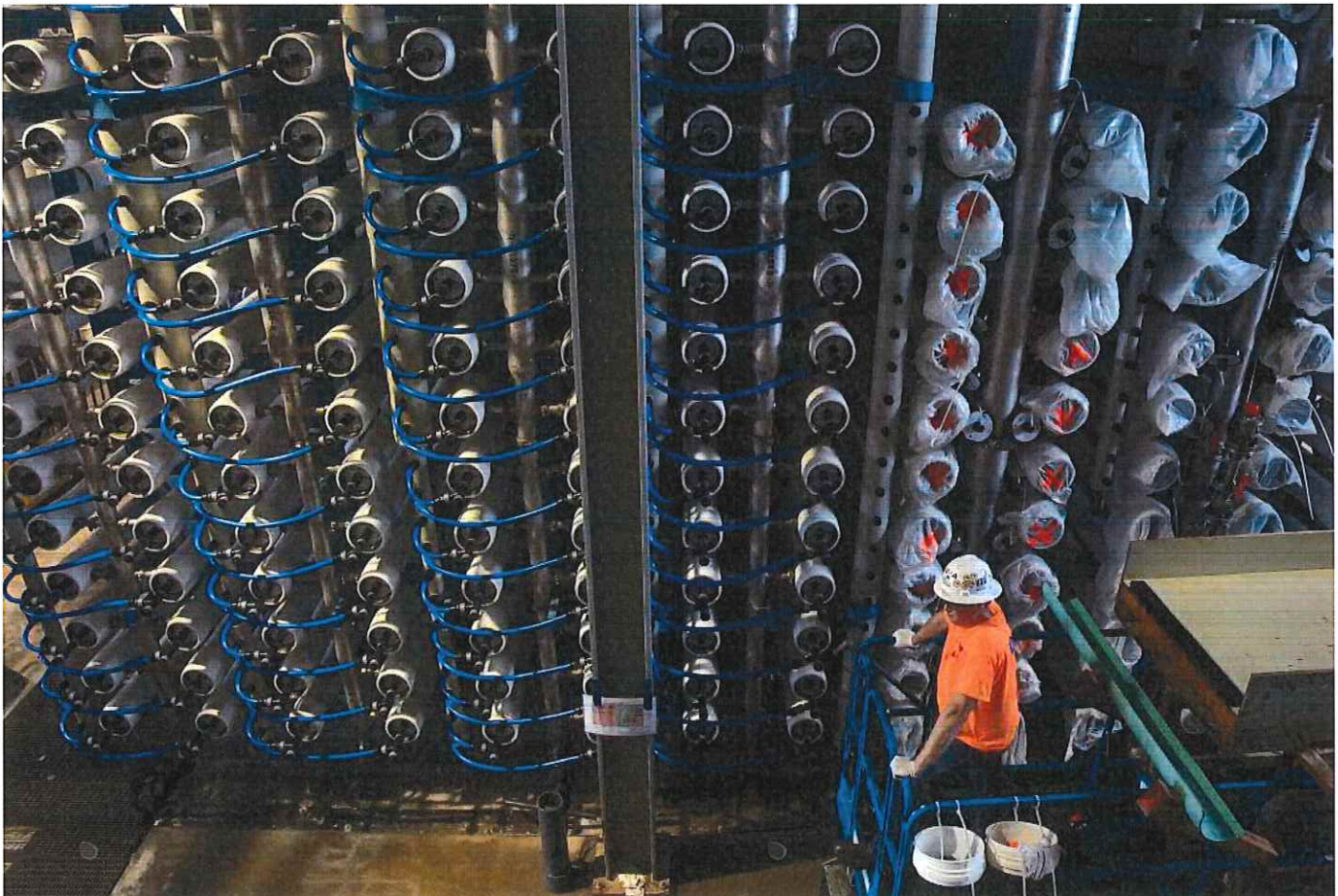
Metropolitan [provided 95 percent](#) of San Diego's water before a dustup over drought restrictions in the early 1990s. Today, that figure is down to 11 percent, thanks to San Diego's investments in desalination, recycling and, most notably, a deal for Colorado River water with Imperial Irrigation District.

Ratepayers could have benefited from more collaboration between the two agencies, Hanemann said. "The bad blood that has existed between Water Authority and Metropolitan has really been harmful to the region."

That has put the spotlight on the widening gap between what Water Authority and Metropolitan charge for untreated water: now \$1,474 an acre foot vs. \$1,075 respectively, according to the report. (An acre foot is enough water to cover an acre a foot deep, or 325,851 gallons.)

Part of that differential stems from San Diego's particularly aggressive conservation, according to the report. Metropolitan saw its demand drop by just 20 percent since 2010, half of the reduction experienced by the Water Authority.

The other side of the equation is the Water Authority's recent slate of capital projects, such as its roughly 16-year, \$1.5 billion effort to expand emergency storage, including the raising of San Vicente Dam. Completed in 2014, the ambitious endeavor nearly doubled the capacity of the region's primary reservoir.



Reverse osmosis membranes being installed at the Poseidon desalination plant in Carlsbad as it approaches completion in 2015. (Misael Virgen/San Diego Union-Tribune/Zuma Pre)

Highly focused on reliability, the wholesaler also inked a deal with [Carlsbad-based Poseidon Water](#) to build a \$1 billion desalination plant in its home town. Water Authority signed a 30-year contract to pay for continuous supplies whether it needs them or not.

The cost for this desalinated water is an eye-popping \$2,725 an acre foot. The report found that last year the region could have shaved about \$215 an acre foot off its wholesale cost for untreated water had it not been obligated to purchase the desalinated water.

“Desal’s a boondoggle,” said Matt O’Malley, executive director and attorney for San Diego Coastkeeper, who opposed the project from the beginning.

He and other environmental advocates urged the city of San Diego to embrace wastewater recycling over desalination over a decade ago. Instead, city officials shelved what was then dubbed “toilet to tap,” clearing the way for the deal with Poseidon.



In recent years, the city of San Diego has revived its beverage recycling plan, under the name Pure Water. However, with legacy investment like desalination far from paid off, many worry an all-of-the-above strategy will create further financial hardship for ratepayers.

The report did find that the desalination plant gave Water Authority more leverage to negotiate with state regulators over mandatory water cutbacks during the last drought. While rural, agricultural districts haven’t been happy with that tradeoff, supporters say the increased reliability will be crucial as climate change takes an ever greater toll on mountain snowpack.

“I think if the state were smart, it would probably build five to 10 desal plants up and down the state,” said Jim Madaffer, a former San Diego City Councilman who serves

on the Water Authority's board. "That would probably solve a lot of the problems."



A supervisor walks through the membrane filtration columns at the Pure Water Demonstration Facility in San Diego. (K.C. Alfred/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

Tom Kennedy, general manager of the heavily agricultural Rainbow Municipal Water District, couldn't disagree more. He said the Water Authority should have foregone the project, acknowledging the emerging trends in long-term conservation and declining sales.

"Demands were going down but everyone said, 'Oh, it's the great recession,'" he said. "They never look at it as systemic. "Now the inflection point of reliability at any price is right here in front of us."

That's been especially true of the [agricultural sector](#), which purchased about 98,000 acre feet of supplies from the Water Authority in 2007. Farmer's desire for water now

hovers around 28,000 acre feet a year.

Tap water messaging

The agency still maintains hope that demand will eventually rise with population growth. It's also increasingly acknowledged the impact of rising rates, given the precarious economic conditions plaguing many parts of the region. It recently formed a Financial Strategy Working Group. On Thursday, staff made a [presentation](#) to members of the agency's board.

Its approach focused on ways to publicly convey the relative affordability of tap water, comparing it to everything from gasoline to milk. Several board members balked at the proposed messaging campaign, saying the agency should be more focused on figuring out how to help struggling residents.

"While the cost of water may seem small compared to other areas, for folks living at the margins ... they may be prioritizing medical assistance, food, just having a roof over their heads," said Ismahan Abdullahi, who represents the city of San Diego on the Water Authority board.

Kennedy echoed that sentiment: "From a financial strategy, it should be, 'What is it we can do to make water more affordable?' I hope as we go forward with this process, we can spend a little more time looking inward."

While the cost of water in San Diego is only expected to increase, L.A.'s rates could eventually catch up, Hanemann said. That's because Metropolitan has its own ambitious plans to invest in new wastewater recycling and will eventually be required to help fund a long-envisioned overhaul of the Bay Delta's conveyance system, which is vulnerable to earthquake and sea-level rise.

Hanemann said it's challenging for water officials to balance future demand against the need for expensive new projects, which can require decades before coming to fruition.

"It's the brutal economic fact of water supply: It's not nimble," he said.

- ENVIRONMENT
- LATEST
- POLITICS
- TOP STORIES
- WEEKEND STORY LINEUP



Get Essential San Diego, weekday mornings

Get top headlines from the Union-Tribune in your inbox weekday mornings, including top news, local, sports, business, entertainment and opinion.

SIGN ME UP

You may occasionally receive promotional content from the San Diego Union-Tribune.



Joshua Emerson Smith

Show Comments

- Support our journalism
- Submit a story tip
- Report a problem with this story

The San Diego Union-Tribune

A California Times Publication

La Niña forecast: NOAA gives update amid dry California winter

KTLA News | By: Tracy Bloom | February 15, 2022



La Niña may persist well into 2022. (NOAA via AP)

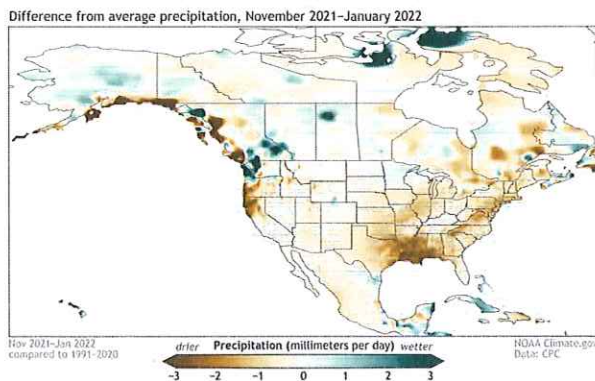
La Niña is expected to stick around for at least a little while longer, with the transition back to neutral conditions most likely not taking place until at least later in spring.

That's according to the latest forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center forecast, which was released late last week.

NOAA says there's an approximately 77% chance that La Niña conditions will linger between March and May. Forecasters also favor the transition back to neutral occurring from June to August, giving that a 57% chance.

This is the second consecutive winter with a La Niña event, which unfortunately for drought-stricken Southern California usually means below-average precipitation for the region during its traditionally wettest months. That's what happened in the Golden State last year, which was among the driest ever recorded.

The winter got off to a promising start with a series of powerful storms that replenished the ever-important Sierra Nevada snowpack and improved California's overall drought outlook. But January and February have been largely bone dry for the state — though heavy rain hit parts of the Southland Tuesday — and the snowpack is once again below normal for this time of year.

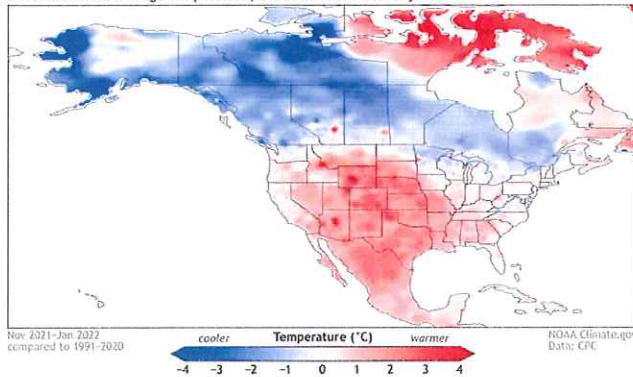


“The precipitation map for November–January also looks a fair bit like the typical La Niña impacts map for this season. Lots of rain and snow in the Pacific Northwest, substantially drier than average through the south-central and southeastern states,” Emily Becker of NOAA's CPC wrote in the agency's ENSO blog.

Since the start of winter, temperatures across California have also been below average for this time of year, according to NOAA.

While cooler temperatures and wet weather may have prevailed Tuesday in the Southland, the region just emerged from a record-setting heat wave that brought widespread highs of the 80s and even low-90s late last week.

Difference from average temperature, November 2021–January 2022



(NOAA)

The warm, dry winter in Southern California shouldn't come as a surprise, however, as the conditions are largely consistent with the seasonal outlook released by the Climate Prediction Center back in November.

La Niña comprises one end of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, and it's marked by cooler sea surface temperatures

in the tropical Pacific Ocean. On the other end of the cycle is El Niño, which happens when sea surface temperatures are warmer. In between, there's the third state known as "neutral."

There have now been five straight three-month periods where the Oceanic Niño Index exceeded the La Niña threshold, which is -0.5 degrees Celsius, NOAA reported.

La Niña conditions started to develop last September, and at the time, the agency gave the climate pattern a 50-50 chance of continuing into spring. That prediction, too, appears to be coming to fruition.

Back-to-back La Niña events aren't necessarily unusual, and experts are already looking ahead to the possibility of conditions developing for a third straight year following a return to ENSO-neutral. However, it's still too soon to tell whether there will be a three-peat.

"We still don't have a very clear picture of that," Becker wrote. "By fall (September–November), neutral still has the edge, but forecasters can't currently give any category a strong chance."

U.S. megadrought worst in at least 1,200 years, researchers say

NBC News | By: Denise Chow | February 15, 2022

The drought also shows no signs of letting up, with increasing temperatures causing the atmosphere to suck up more moisture. "It's a slow-motion train wreck," one scientist said.



Houseboats float in a narrow section of water in a depleted Lake Oroville in Oroville, Calif., on Sept. 5, 2021. Josh Edelson / AFP via Getty Images file

The megadrought that has gripped the southwestern United States for the past 22 years is the worst since at least 800 A.D., according to a new study that examined shifts in water availability and soil moisture over the past 12 centuries.

The research, which suggests that the past two decades in the American Southwest have been the driest period in 1,200 years, pointed to human-caused climate change as a major reason for the current drought's severity. The findings were published Monday in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

Jason Smerdon, one of the study's authors and a climate scientist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, said global warming has made the megadrought more extreme because it creates a "thirstier" atmosphere that is better able to pull moisture out of forests, vegetation and soil.

"It's a slow-motion train wreck," he said. "What we showed in the paper is that increasing temperatures in the Southwest contributed about 42 percent to the severity of this drought."



A dead fish from Lake Powell in the sand at Lone Rock Beach in Big Water, Utah, on June 23. Justin Sullivan / Getty Images file

Over the past two decades, temperatures in the Southwest were around 1.64 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the average from 1950 to 1999, according to the researchers. Globally, the world has warmed by about 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the late 1800s.

In the study, Smerdon and his colleagues analyzed tree rings to piece together water availability throughout history, using data that stretches back to the year 800 A.D. The scientists focused

on a swath of North America from southern Montana to northern Mexico, and from the Pacific Ocean east to the Rocky Mountains.

Tree rings are one way that scientists can estimate soil moisture conditions in past climates. Researchers can build detailed chronologies by looking at the thickness of tree rings, with thinner rings indicating drier years with less moisture, and wider rings signifying wetter years.

The results can then be compared to other paleoclimate signatures, including from sediment samples and archaeological records, as well as observational data throughout history, to forensically fill out a timeline of Earth's climate.



Dry cracked earth is visible as water levels are low at Nicasio Reservoir in California in May. Justin Sullivan / Getty Images file

The researchers found that several significant megadroughts have occurred in the region over the past 12 centuries, some even lasting up to 30 years. Before the current megadrought, the region had not experienced such dry conditions since medieval times, in the late 1500s.

But while droughts occur naturally throughout history, climate change is making them both more frequent and more intense, the scientists said. And compared to other megadroughts in the historical record, what's surprising is that this current drought shows no signs of letting up, said A. Park Williams, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the study's lead author.

"Twenty-two years in, some of these big megadroughts in the past were starting to peter out," he said. "This drought is not petering out. Instead, it's in full swing and is as strong now as it ever was before."

Based on current climate trends, the study found that there's a 75 percent chance that the current drought will hit the 30-year mark.

During that time, precipitation levels may fluctuate, with some years being wetter than others, Williams said. With such extreme dryness in the region, however, it will likely take multiple consecutive wet years to end the drought.

"When you have worse and worse droughts that are closer and closer together, there's just no time to recover," Williams said.

Isabel Montañez, a geologist and geochemist at the University of California, Davis, who was not involved with the research, said the study confirms the grim outlook that models have been projecting but adds a new component of isolating the impact of human-caused climate change.

"Being able to conclude that around 40 percent of this is probably driven by climate change is not surprising to anyone who does this work, but it's now been tested," she said. "And it's quantitative."

Montañez's own research focuses on studying deposits in caves, such as stalagmites, to understand the incidence and intensity of droughts and wildfires throughout California's history. She said that scientists have long known about the impacts of global warming on droughts, but that communities are only now grappling with the consequences.



A boater moves past the bathtub ring that is visible at low water levels near Hoover Dam, on the border of Nevada and Arizona, at Lake Mead. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images file

The megadrought has already depleted water supplies in two of the largest reservoirs in North America, forcing officials across states to rethink water management strategies for the years ahead. Dry conditions have also increased the risk of wildfires year-round and

threatened the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers in the region.

"It's going to transform how we operate," Montañez said. "Big changes are coming."

While the study's findings are alarming, Smerdon said it's still not too late to avert the worst impacts of climate change. He said he hopes the research compels communities and governments to act.

"If you're on a boat getting tossed around by waves, you don't go up to the captain and ask, 'Are we screwed?' You find a bucket and you start bailing water," he said. "That's the attitude we all have to have about this. We need to all go pick up a bucket and get to work."

AMWA seeks equitable access to water infrastructure dollars

February 14, 2022 at 5:00 AM

As EPA prepares to issue guidance to outline the distribution and use of nearly \$50 billion worth of new water infrastructure funding that will be delivered through the recently enacted Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), AMWA wrote to the agency last week in support of enabling metropolitan water systems to access the portion of funds set aside as grants and principal forgiveness loans.

AMWA's letter noted that the BIL requires EPA to distribute 49 percent of new funding delivered through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs to "eligible recipients" in the form of grants or principal forgiveness loans. But the BIL does not define "eligible recipients," so AMWA urged EPA to recognize them to be "any community water system or treatment works that is eligible to receive SRF aid, and which will use [BIL] funds on projects that will significantly benefit low-income communities."

AMWA further encouraged the agency to "not simply rely on the Safe Drinking Water Act's definition of a 'disadvantaged community' when identifying the universe of water systems that may be eligible for this additional subsidy." This is because many states define disadvantaged communities to focus on small and rural water systems, to the exclusion of metropolitan utilities that serve diverse populations across low-income and more affluent neighborhoods.

"[L]imiting the additionally subsidized BIL SRF dollars to only these state-defined disadvantaged communities would exacerbate inequities," AMWA wrote, "as metropolitan utilities in some states would be eligible for the funding while similar metropolitan utilities in other states would be excluded." Instead, AMWA said the additionally subsidized funds should be available to any water system that will spend them on "projects that significantly benefit low-income communities or ratepayers in the service area."

EPA plans to finalize its BIL guidance in the coming weeks, and the first tranche of funds are expected to make their way to states soon after.

[Back to February 14, 2022](#)

State bill would ban all offshore oil drilling in California waters

Proposal from state Sen. Dave Min could test the national appetite for a serious move toward green energy.

SGV Tribune | BY: Brooke Staggs | February 9, 2022



Platform Holly, an oil rig offshore of Santa Barbara County, has been idle since 2015, when an onshore pipeline burst forced its closure. The platform operator then went bankrupt, and the state is expected to spend tens of millions to dismantle the structure. (State Lands Commission via AP)

Following up on a pledge he made in October, when Orange County was dealing with the environmental and economic damage inflicted by a 25,000-gallon oil spill off the coast of Huntington Beach, state Sen. Dave Min formally introduced a bill Wednesday to end oil drilling in California waters by the end of next year.

Senate Bill 953 wouldn't touch a major source of energy; drilling in state-controlled water accounts for a tiny fraction of the nation's oil needs. But it could serve as a litmus test of sorts for other environmental and climate policies, as passage would require some short-term sacrifices for taxpayers, and conflict with oil companies and their union workers, in exchange for long-term strides toward renewable energy and a cleaner coastal environment.

Specifically, Min said, the push to end offshore drilling in California waters probably would require taxpayers to pay two small oil companies tens of millions to hundreds of millions of dollars to walk away from their existing contracts. There also would be a slight dip in the state's energy production, and the loss of dozens, if not hundreds, of high-paying jobs.

That's why GOP leaders such as Assemblywoman Laurie Davies, whose 73rd District includes southern Orange County's coast, said she doesn't support a complete offshore oil ban.

But Min and supporters of his bill argue that taxpayers already pay even bigger bills when coastal economies are disrupted and massive cleanups are required every time a pipeline bursts, a phenomenon that is expected to become more frequent due to the age of offshore oil infrastructure. Also, as production wanes, oil operators are filing bankruptcy and abandoning their platforms, leaving taxpayers to pay for plugging and dismantling those wells.

"I'm an environmentalist," Min said, calling climate change "the top issue of our lifetime." But, he added, "you don't have to agree with me (about the climate change) to recognize that offshore oil drilling off California doesn't make sense."

Most oil drilling off California shores is in federal waters, which typically begins about three nautical miles off the coast. There are 23 platforms in federal waters off California, including the one connected to the pipeline that burst off Huntington Beach on Oct. 1.

But there are three active platforms in state-controlled waters, all offshore from Orange County. Platforms Eva and Emmy are off Huntington Beach, and platform Esther is off Seal Beach. Eva and Esther are operated by DCOR, a small Oxnard-based oil company, while Emmy is operated by California Resources Company, based in Santa Clarita.

Combined, Min said, taking those three platforms offline would drain U.S. oil production by “a fraction of a fraction of a percent.”

California hasn’t allowed new offshore oil leases in state waters since 1969, after an oil rig off the coast of Santa Barbara leaked 3 million gallons of crude into the ocean, an event that now ranks as the third biggest oil spill in U.S. history. But leases issued before 1969 remain in use until they’re revoked, or a well is pumped dry. And California has continued to issue permits to extend the decades-old rigs, allowing companies to upgrade or even drill new wells as long as they connect to existing pipelines.

Under Min’s bill, the state would terminate all existing leases in state waters by Dec. 31, 2023. Companies still would be required to pay for decommissioning and restoring surrounding tidelands, per current leases.

But the bill also would give the State Lands Commission authority to negotiate “voluntary relinquishment of a lease,” meaning the state would pay the companies to walk away from their contracts before the end of 2023.

How much that would cost taxpayers remains an open — and potentially expensive — question.

Under the termination plan, Min said California essentially would be using eminent domain to take back the territory now leased to the oil companies. That process would require taxpayers to pay fair market value to the property owner or lessee.

Min said representatives from California Resources Corporation suggested they’re open to talking about his proposal, and that their profits from their platform run between \$10 million and \$15 million a year. A company spokesman said Wednesday that California Resources does not “publicly report net profits for the one offshore platform, but the operation is profitable and early termination would require compensation.”

Min said he has not yet been able to meet with representatives of DCOR, and the Oxnard company didn’t respond to a Register request for comment. But Min said he assumes that company’s operations are similarly profitable.

Since leases are valid until wells run dry, and oil production from the local wells is in decline, Min’s formula estimates that operations at the three wells would be viable for about 20 years and that profits would diminish during that period. Using that formula, he estimates compensated profits for the life of each platform would be \$50 million to \$100 million.

But oil companies also are on the hook for decommissioning costs, which Min said California Resources Corporation officials estimated would be \$20 to \$30 million. So, subtract those costs

from profits, and you get a ballpark estimate of \$60 to \$240 million to buy out the three contracts.

For context, the state so far has estimated its costs to clean up from the October oil spill in Huntington Beach at \$3 million, with no federal estimates yet available. And Min notes that doesn't include the economic impact of closing beaches for more than a week and halting fishing along the 45-mile coast for nearly two months.

With California looking at a significant budget surplus in the year ahead, Min is hopeful that Gov. Gavin Newsom will dedicate funds to help buy out the oil leases.

Min also said he is reaching out to unions that might be affected by his bill. He wants to talk about a possible transition to new jobs that would require similar skills and have similar pay scales, such as working on offshore wind projects.

But Davies' office said any outright ban of oil drilling would simply eliminate "high-quality union worker jobs." Davies' office also said Min's bill does not address what's suspected to be the direct cause of the Oct. 1 spill, which investigators believe was caused by a ship anchor that struck the pipeline months before it burst.

So, Davies introduced Assembly Bill 1611, which would beef up notification requirements for ship owners and operators that hit offshore pipelines, making it more likely that oil companies could check for damage before a spill occurs.

While a ship anchor may have damaged the pipeline, Min's team pointed out the October spill was much worse due to a suspected hours-long delay in the oil company shutting off the supply. That's why, no matter what precautions are in place, Min said, "where there is drilling, there is going to be spilling."

Both Huntington Beach and Laguna Beach have passed city resolutions supporting an offshore drilling ban, and animal rights and environmental groups on Wednesday applauded news of Min's bill.

"It's time to get this dirty, dangerous and utterly reckless industry out of our coastal waters," said Miyoko Sakashita, a director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Min's bill is expected to headfirst to the state Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee before it would go the full legislature for votes.