



San Diego County Water Authority

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September 1, 2017

Scott Lewis, Editor in Chief
Voice of San Diego

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OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

County of San Diego

Re: Water Authority Committed to Water-Use Efficiency

The headline on an Aug. 31 story about the San Diego County Water Authority’s efforts to navigate complex operational challenges was, well, all wet.

VOSD proclaimed that “Water Officials Hope to Drive Up Water Usage” – an idea that runs counter to decades of water-use efficiency and conservation efforts by our agency. In fact, the Water Authority is not trying to drive up water usage. Rather, we are developing strategies to accommodate changes in water use, specifically demands that remain well below pre-drought levels. Those are two very different things.

Operational and water quality actions under consideration would increase deliveries of the Water Authority’s treated water supplies to retail water agencies in the southern part of the county, but these same water agencies would decrease use of other water sources by the same amount or reduce their purchase of untreated water from the Water Authority. Other ideas being analyzed include changing the location that retail water agencies would take their water from the Water Authority’s system to improve flow conditions. Total water use would not change. While the story mentions these collaborative efforts, the headline leaves the misguided impression that we are trying to convince residents and businesses to increase water use.

Not only is that not the case, it goes against 30 years of our history. Ever since the 1987-92 drought, the Water Authority has been a leader in conservation, sponsoring many of the landmark pieces of legislation that have hardwired efficiencies statewide. From 1990 to 2015, per capita water use in the San Diego region dropped nearly 40 percent – even before the state’s emergency water-use mandates took effect. Today, water use remains about 20 percent below 2013 levels.

Challenges maintaining water quality and flow levels in large-diameter pipelines are among the many unintended consequences of the state’s centralized approach to the most recent drought. We are dealing with some of those impacts in our pipeline system by developing a range of potential solutions – none of which include telling residents and businesses that they should use more water.

Sincerely,

Maureen A. Stapleton, General Manager
San Diego County Water Authority

A public agency providing a safe and reliable water supply to the San Diego region