

California's Water:

A Crisis We Can't Ignore



Water is a vital resource in California. Without it, taps run dry, streams stop flowing, businesses suffer and crops die. Today, California's water system is aging, our levees are crumbling and the ecosystem is in peril.

A Public Education Program
Sponsored by the Association
of California Water Agencies

www.calwatercrisis.org





A problem too big to ignore...

Despite intense attention from the media and state leaders, the people of California remain largely unaware of the crisis facing the state's aging water supply and delivery system. The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) has created a statewide public education program, "California's Water: A Crisis We Can't Ignore," to educate Californians about the critical challenges now confronting the state's water system.

This multi-faceted, multi-million dollar program will directly reach the public through television, radio and print advertising, as well as through Internet and community outreach. Funded by voluntary contributions from public water agencies throughout the state, the public education program will raise awareness about the current and future water problems facing the Golden State. With so much at stake, this crisis is just too big for the public to ignore.

Water in crisis...

Water is essential to California's quality of life. But, our statewide water delivery system faces a complex set of problems that threatens water supplies for people, the economy and the environment.

- The Delta, a key natural estuary and the pathway through which more than 25 million Californians and 2.5 million acres of productive farmland receive their water, is in an **ecological crisis** that threatens people as well as the environment.
- **Aging levees** in the Delta are at risk of a natural disaster that could cripple water deliveries for an extended period of time. Experts warn that a 6.5 magnitude earthquake would cause substantial damage to the levees, resulting in **severe flooding** of communities and farmland, allowing the intrusion of salt water into the Delta's fresh water and dramatically disrupting the statewide water supply and delivery system.
- A recent federal court ruling **cut water supplies** from the state's two largest water delivery systems by up to one-third to protect an endangered fish—potentially the largest court-ordered water supply reduction in California history. The San Francisco Bay Area, Central and Southern California will see a significant reduction in available water supplies because of this court action.
- California's **population** continues to **grow rapidly**, but it's been 30 years since investments were made in our statewide water system on the scale needed.
- Statewide **water reserves** are **extremely low** and would not be able to meet public demand during a major disruption to the state's water delivery system.

"A federal judge's order sharply limiting the water that can be drawn from the delta once again underscores the fragility of California's water supplies and the complexity of the delta ecosystem."

San Jose Mercury News, 9/6/07



- California is facing **severe drought conditions**, with 2007 ranking as a record dry-year in some regions. If the current drought continues, mandatory water rationing may be imposed in many areas. Further, climate change is reducing our mountain snow pack—a critical source of natural water storage—and may usher in longer droughts and more severe floods.
- **Conservation alone is simply not enough** to offset the collective impacts of drought, climate change, increased population demands, court-ordered supply reductions and/or potential natural disasters, despite great strides in water conservation and efficiency programs.
- Without water, California farmers cannot plant and grow crops. Because of significantly reduced supplies and growing water concerns, some California **farmers are letting fields sit idle**, hurting one of the state's most important industries.

"The current drought in California, coupled with continued population growth and long-term climate change, will make it increasingly difficult to maintain a reliable water supply..."

San Diego Union Tribune, 9/2/07

"Other urban water districts from the Bay Area to San Diego will have to use other sources, drought supplies or simply use less water, which could lead to hardships next year. However, the biggest loser in California will be agriculture, and the impact is likely to be felt within a year."

Contra Costa Times, 9/5/07



"A natural disaster, such as a significant earthquake, would wipe out water supplies from the Delta, leaving people throughout the state high and dry at their faucets."

Bakersfield Californian,
7/14/07



How can I help?

The "California's Water: A Crisis We Can't Ignore" public education program is a broad-based effort involving a wide variety of organizations and people. Local water agencies can contact ACWA for a "tool kit" that can be used to help educate customers and local organizations in their community. Others can download information from the Web site, www.calwatercrisis.org, or contact us to receive the information by mail. If you would like to help spread information about the water crisis to your organization or business, please contact us and we can provide you with bulk supplies of our materials.

State leaders recognize the crisis the state is facing.

"Our water crisis has gotten worse with the dry conditions and the recent federal court action that is going to have a devastating impact on the state's economy and the 25 million Californians who depend on Delta water."

—Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

"I have just one statistic, one only, and that is 25 million people depend on Delta water for the drinking water of the state. And the probability of a big earthquake over 6.7 is 75% in the next 30 years. And if that were to happen, there are all indications that the Delta could collapse, the water would be gone, there would be no water for drinking, there would be no water for agriculture, there would be no water for fish, marsh, ecosystems."

—U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein

About ACWA

ACWA is the largest coalition of public water agencies in the country. Its 450 public agency members deliver 90% of the water used by communities, cities, farms and businesses in California. Together, they play an active role in managing and protecting the state's water resources and planning for the future. ACWA members are strong proponents of water use efficiency, leaders in water quality research and innovators of new technologies.

To learn more about "California's Water: A Crisis We Can't Ignore," please visit www.calwatercrisis.org or call (916) 441-4545.

