



2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & PRINCIPLES

The 2024 Legislative Priorities and Principles lay out an integrated “One Water” collaborative approach to managing Southern California’s watersheds, water resources, and water infrastructure to ensure long-term resilience and reliability for communities and ecosystems.

Staff use this document to advocate for these priorities and principles at the state and federal levels through advancing Metropolitan-sponsored legislation, engaging on bills or pursuing federal and state funding.

Adopted by
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors
on
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2024 Legislative Priorities

To help adapt to a changing climate, protect water resources, and partner with communities we serve, Metropolitan will work to support administrative/legislative actions and federal and state funding for the following priorities in 2024:

A. Top Legislative Priorities:

1. Continue support for imported water supply resiliency and reliability, including planning for the Delta Conveyance Project, Sites Reservoir Project, Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Voluntary Agreements), and the development of near-term and post-2026 Colorado River operating guidelines.
2. Conserve existing water supplies and prepare for climate change by supporting demand management and water use efficiency, long-term non-functional turf conversion, and a federal tax exemption for water conservation rebates.
3. Advance Pure Water Southern California and other water recycling projects and long-term supply reliability improvements.
4. Support funding for regional conveyance and water storage improvements to ensure the region's water supply is adequate and reliable for all member agencies.
5. Protect drinking water quality and access to safe and reliable drinking water, including upholding the polluter pays principle and ensuring the continued cleanup of sites along the Colorado River.
6. Support adaptive management for ecosystem restoration in the Bay-Delta and Colorado River watersheds that takes into consideration evolving climate conditions, risk analyses, and best available science.
7. Improve water affordability, especially for disadvantaged communities, without burdening existing ratepayers.

B. Metropolitan-Sponsored State Bill (Board approved in November 2023, MI 53444)

1. Support administrative/legislative actions to amend the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act to eliminate the sunset date to allow Metropolitan to continue operating under its existing master reclamation plan.



2024 Legislative Policy Principles

The 2024 Legislative Policy Principles will guide and inform Metropolitan’s engagement on state and federal legislative and regulatory activities. They were developed in consultation with subject matter experts at Metropolitan. The principles holistically address six strategic areas of policy that inform Metropolitan’s One Water Vision and the Board-led process for developing the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water (CAMP4W). These policy areas include: (1) drinking water; (2) regional water resource management; (3) imported water supply; (4) sustainability, resiliency, and innovation; (5) infrastructure; and (6) system resiliency.

I. Drinking Water – Metropolitan provides to the Southern California region high-quality, reliable drinking water in an economically responsible way that surpasses all federal and state drinking water regulations.

A. Water Quality and Treatment

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that utilize best available science, occurrence and health effects data, and appropriate cost-benefit analyses or economic feasibility to protect public health and improve water quality. Apply these principles when setting maximum contaminant levels, health advisories, or notification/response levels, in addition to assessing laboratory capacity, analytical methods, and other regulatory standards or guidance levels.
2. Support application of the “polluter pays” principle such that parties responsible for introducing contaminants, such as per- and polyfluoralkyl substances, in or near drinking water sources are held liable for cleanup, and not drinking water and wastewater facilities that subsequently store, transport, or treat the water.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for treatment and mitigation measures to comply with any new regulatory standards, develop risk communication tools, as well as provide adequate time for implementation.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to protect source water quality, reduce threats from invasive species, and mitigate harmful algal blooms.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the constituents of emerging concern (CEC) Action Fund to improve the State Water Resource Control Board’s knowledge of CEC in waters of the state and drinking water.

B. Water Governance, Affordability, and Funding – Metropolitan supports efforts to provide access to safe, reliable and affordable drinking water to all residents.

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that prioritize providing safe, reliable and affordable drinking water to disadvantaged communities.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that improve water affordability throughout the region, especially for disadvantaged communities, without burdening existing ratepayers.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to help water systems provide low-income ratepayer assistance programs.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that improve governance and long-term sustainability of non-compliant water systems and provide



assistance for voluntary consolidations that improve their technical, managerial, or financial capacity, while ensuring that all receiving public water systems are consulted on changes of organization, including proposed consolidations or extensions of service area.

5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that provide local agencies flexibility in determining fees for service and assessment amounts.
6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that ensure the limited resources of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund are allocated to advance projects, operation and maintenance costs, infrastructure improvements, and/or consolidation actions that will achieve long-term sustainability for water systems and the communities that rely on those systems.

II. Regional Water Resource Management – Metropolitan’s One Water Vision and the Board-led CAMP4W process promote collaboration with member agencies to plan for future water supply needs and the challenges ahead in a reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner. This involves protecting imported water supplies and quality, supporting local resource development, advancing water use efficiency, and supporting ecosystem protection and restoration.

A. Conservation

1. Support tax exemptions and/or credits for water conservation or efficiency incentives, including but not limited to long-term conversion of non-functional turf (NFT), local stormwater capture, and other measures to reduce consumption of water or enhance the absorption and infiltration capacity of the landscape.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to encourage equitable water use efficiency and recycled water use among agricultural, industrial, and urban sectors.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to advance Conservation as a California Way of Life in a manner that maintains flexibility and local control. Support efforts to ensure new statutes and regulations are based on science; recognize regional distinctions (i.e., climate, land use, population, and hydrology); water affordability; and potential impacts to wastewater operations and recycled water projects.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for leak detection and water loss reduction. Support the development and implementation of flexible water loss standards for both retail and wholesale water systems.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions for the long-term conversion of NFT in commercial, industrial, and institutional landscapes and ban installation of NFT in new construction. Support federal/state funding for the long-term conversion of NFT in residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional landscapes.



B. Desalination & Groundwater Remediation

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for brackish groundwater and seawater desalination projects, consistent with the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio and 2022 Water Supply Strategy and Metropolitan's CAMP4W goals.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for salinity control projects, including but not limited to source control, treatment, and concentrate management.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for research, pilot tests, and demonstration studies to encourage the development of environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient desalination technologies.

C. Recycled Water

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the Pure Water Southern California Program and related projects.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve flexibility of the State's water recycling grant program.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the implementation of the National Water Reuse Action Plan and California Water Reuse Action Plan while protecting local flexibility and encouraging local, state, and federal coordination, research, and innovation.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that facilitate the adoption of direct potable reuse regulations by December 31, 2023. These actions include but are not limited to planning, development, and implementation of local and regional potable reuse projects; and initiatives to fill research gaps and advance the science to promote the further development of potable reuse.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to promote voluntary on-site water treatment systems if they maintain compliance with Title 22 and do not negatively affect municipal water recycling systems.
6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that maximize voluntary use of recycled water.

D. Local Supply Development

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that protect and advance local flexibility and responsiveness in developing locally appropriate, climate-resilient diverse resource portfolios.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that promote integrated water resources development by advocating for clear, concise, and expedited regulations/policies that are easily understandable by the regulated community and public.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to expedite the development of new local resources (including recycled water, direct potable reuse, groundwater, stormwater, desalination projects, and groundwater remediation)



without compromising the operational, financial, water quality, regulatory, environmental, and customer interests of Metropolitan and other water and wastewater agencies.

4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that advance stormwater as a beneficial resource and facilitate the funding and permitting of stormwater capture projects to augment local and regional water supplies and promote holistic watershed health.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that advance Metropolitan's surface and groundwater storage and/or recovery programs with member agencies and other partners.

E. Watershed Management

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to enhance watershed management in Southern California, the Bay-Delta, and Colorado River watersheds that provide broad public benefits, including water quality and water supply reliability, reduced wildfire risks, greater scientific understanding, and other environmental improvements.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that help advance implementation of watershed management plans, including watershed research and multi-benefit forestry management projects.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for implementation of the California Water Resiliency Portfolio and the Water Supply Strategy, as consistent with Metropolitan goals and objectives, to ensure improved watershed-scale coordination, watershed management and planning, and programs and funding that provide water resilience and improve watershed functions.

III. Imported Water Supply – Metropolitan provides imported water supplies to its member agencies from two primary sources: the Colorado River via the Colorado Aqueduct and Northern California watersheds via the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the State Water Project (SWP).

A. Bay-Delta Initiatives– Metropolitan is involved in several key regulatory and planning processes in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta related to the operation of the SWP. The goal is to advance water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration concurrently by modernizing the state's water infrastructure with the proposed Delta Conveyance Project and improving the habitat and function of the Delta estuary for the benefit of threatened and endangered species. To advance these goals, Metropolitan supports collaborative scientific efforts to better understand how to restore and manage the Bay-Delta while reducing reliance consistent with the 2009 Delta Reform Act (Delta Reform Act).

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to advance Delta Conveyance and EcoRestore in support of California's coequal goals of water supply reliability and Delta ecosystem restoration and the Governor's California Water Resilience Portfolio.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve scientific understanding of listed Delta fish and wildlife species and water project operations in the Delta, including data collection, real-time monitoring, and modeling. Promote the use of best available science to protect and restore aquatic species and



habitats, and enhance flexibility for water project operations while maintaining regulatory and statutory protections for species listed under the state and federal Endangered Species Act.

3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for implementation of state policies adopted as part of the Delta Reform Act and water management package, including clarification of the monitoring, reporting, and enforcement provisions related to in-Delta diversions.
 4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to consolidate review and oversight of anadromous species protection under the U.S. Department of the Interior.
 5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that protect water quality for beneficial uses and that are implemented consistent with California water rights priorities.
 6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to advance the Delta Freshwater Pathway, levee improvements (including levee modernization for the existing Delta levee system), levee maintenance programs (including real-time monitoring for the existing Delta levee system), and secure Delta flood-fighting materials and stockpiles.
 7. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding in the Delta watershed to account for and administer the California water rights system, including protecting stored water releases.
 8. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to advance Sites Reservoir and the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Voluntary Agreements), consistent with the Board's action to advance these efforts.
- B. Colorado River Resources – The Colorado River is a critical resource for the entire Southwest and many diverse ecosystems. Degradation of the Colorado River's water quality can cause significant economic, environmental, and human health impacts across the West. Metropolitan and other interested parties work to ensure we can continue to supply our communities with a safe and reliable water supply.
1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding of conservation and efficiency projects to enhance the resiliency of the Colorado River System and Metropolitan's Colorado River supplies.
 2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to ensure that sufficient water is stored and delivered from Lake Mead to meet regional water supply needs while acknowledging the evolving Law of the River.
 3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the cleanup of contaminated sites along the Colorado River. This includes, but is not limited to, uranium remediation in Moab, Utah; perchlorate remediation in Henderson, Nevada; hexavalent chromium remediation near Topock, Arizona; and a waste disposal site near Hoover Dam.
 4. Promote continued coordination between states and federal agencies to further the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program) and work to include



water conservation as a criterion in the selection of salinity control projects. Support actions to stabilize the financial position of the Program and maintain the operation of the United States Bureau of Reclamation's Paradox Valley Unit salinity control project at a safe level.

5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the implementation of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species in a manner that allows the Lower Basin States to conserve Colorado River water.
 6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that advance binational water conservation programs that benefit Colorado River supply augmentation and habitat restoration objectives.
 7. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to update and apply reasonable and beneficial use determinations while acknowledging the evolving Law of the River.
- C. State Water Project – About 30 percent of Southern California's water comes from the SWP in an average year. Metropolitan works with state and federal agencies as well as other SWP contractors to manage threats to the project and address environmental needs and augment water supplies through existing and potential collaborative transfers and groundwater banking agreements.
1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to address the impacts of subsidence on the SWP and prevent future damage caused by unsustainable groundwater pumping.
 2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for joint state and federal facility repairs, rehabilitation, and improvements, and ensure funding is equitably distributed between partners while maintaining SWP supply reliability.
 3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the cleanup of contaminated groundwater storage basins used for Metropolitan water banking programs along the California Aqueduct.
 4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the public share of costs, including recreation, flood protection, mitigation, environmental enhancement, and rehabilitation for multi-purpose SWP facilities.



IV. Sustainability, Resiliency, and Innovation – Metropolitan supports policies and funding that encourage sustainable practices that improve water and power system resilience and adapt to a rapidly changing environmental landscape. Metropolitan strives to fulfill the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

A. Carbon Neutrality

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to implement Metropolitan’s Climate Action Plan to reduce Metropolitan’s greenhouse gas emissions and reach carbon neutrality by 2045.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to assist the Department of Water Resources in reaching carbon neutrality for the SWP by 2045 in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve, develop, and promote innovative climate adaptation solutions and support science-based strategies and tools that benefit the environment by restoring healthy soils, conserving water, and capturing and/or sequestering carbon.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that assists public agencies in the transition to zero-emission fleets and equipment.

B. Water/Energy Nexus

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for energy efficiency and storage projects, and programs to reduce greenhouse gases and develop renewable resources.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that remove barriers and encourage energy sector investments in water conservation and energy management programs.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that preserve Metropolitan’s ability to pursue a diverse set of supply options and oppose constraints on supply development, such as water resource loading orders based solely on energy intensity.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to ensure power costs are appropriate and proportional to the benefits received and that water system operations are not adversely affected by power-related legislation/administrative actions.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for water/energy nexus projects and maintain Cap-and-Trade allowances for Metropolitan and Department of Water Resources (i.e., State Water Contractors).
6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that maintain Board authority over energy-related matters (e.g., system reserve margin or resource adequacy requirements).



C. Renewable Energy

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that define hydropower generation as renewable energy irrespective of a facility's nameplate generating capacity and include the provision of renewable energy credits for hydroelectric generation.
2. E-Ensure that administrative/legislative actions and funding to enhance or expand hydropower at existing dams do not adversely impact those dams, either financially or operationally, or entities with rights to the power from the existing resources that directly or indirectly impact Metropolitan's service area.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve federal hydropower relicensing for existing facilities, including SWP resources.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the SWP and the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) to incorporate renewable energy resources, such as pumped hydroelectric energy, that contribute to the state's climate goals without impacting the projects' primary purpose, provided consideration is given to transmission limitations, cost and portfolio availability, and unrelated impacts are not shifted to SWP or CRA facilities.

D. Environmental Stewardship

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for environmental compliance to improve clarity and workability of the requirements and promote consistency and reduce regulatory duplication, while protecting public health and the environment.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to facilitate non-mitigation habitat restoration projects that benefit endangered and threatened species.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for research and partnerships on water science, including snowpack and streamflow monitoring, runoff, drinking water quality, salinity control, source water protection, soil moisture monitoring, healthy soils, and watershed research.

E. Workforce Development – Metropolitan is committed to ensuring the resiliency of its workforce and to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion to promote the physical and mental safety and well-being of its workforce and the communities it serves.

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve educational opportunities in the water sector, including career technical education and workforce development.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that improve water system staff training and certification processes.



F. Innovation – Supporting and promoting innovation and emerging technologies continues Metropolitan’s long tradition of creatively solving difficult challenges.

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the research and development of new and emerging technologies such as satellite- and computer-based technologies to monitor source water quality, ecosystem health, state- and federal-threatened and endangered species; measure and predict agricultural water use, urban outdoor water use, and reservoir evaporation; and expand coordination with technology incubators, research institutions, and other stakeholder groups.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to promote open water data platforms and sharing, including improving access to agency data, streamlining the collection and submission of water agency data, and promoting collaboration among federal, state, and local stakeholders.

V. Infrastructure – Metropolitan has a strategic priority to invest in key capital projects in our region to enable long-term, reliable water deliveries. Key capital projects identified in Metropolitan’s Capital Investment Plan focus on improvements to the CRA, treatment plants, and distribution systems.

- A. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to initiate, expedite, and defray the costs of planning, financing, constructing, repairing, and rehabilitating water infrastructure projects, including but not limited to general obligation bonds, tax-exempt municipal bonds, grants, low-interest loans, and direct appropriations. Ensure equitable cost-sharing of water infrastructure projects.
- B. Support administrative/legislative actions to expand funding programs, expedite project approval and reporting processes, and prevent project backlogs in state and federal funding or financing.
- C. Support the “beneficiaries pay” approach as a financing mechanism for statewide projects and programs and oppose public goods charges, or other charges levied on water agencies for funding broader public benefits.
- D. Support administrative/legislative and funding for the public share of costs, including mitigation, rehabilitation, and recreation, for multi-purpose water infrastructure.
- E. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for new or expanded water infrastructure or programs that complement existing water supplies to ensure reliability for all member agencies.

VI. System Resiliency – Metropolitan diligently maintains and significantly invests to safeguard a region-wide water supply system that is a cornerstone of Southern California’s \$1.6 trillion economy. Changes in the climate and accompanying weather extremes are serious challenges facing Metropolitan. Additionally, Metropolitan needs to be prepared to respond rapidly to natural disasters and security threats. Resiliency ensures the water supply and delivery system is strong, can return to service quickly, and is prepared to address future challenges.



A. Climate Resiliency

1. Support legislative/administrative actions and funding for local and regional drought resiliency projects to improve system flexibility.
2. Support legislative/administrative actions and funding for planning and research into the potential water resource and quality effects of climate change.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for imported source watershed protection and enhancement of water quality, supply, and demand-side management actions to help offset the effects of climate change.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that recognize and help mitigate the significant differences in the capability and needs of communities and regions to withstand the impacts of climate change.
5. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for local drought contingency planning areas in the state that have increased concern about wholesale water system delivery constraints.
6. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that facilitate the integration of existing and planned local water supply, distribution systems, and regional water facilities.

B. Emergency Preparedness

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that assist the water industry in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from extreme weather events and natural disasters, including earthquakes and wildfires, catastrophic accidents, and physical or cyber sabotage. These actions may include, but are not limited to, actions to provide funding for emergency responses and planning and post-emergency restoration of service.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that assist the water industry to address the effects of wildfires and power outages, including the impacts of public safety power shutoff events.
3. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency programs to assist with emergency repairs and improvements, including but not limited to dam safety, spillway improvements, and erosion control repairs.

C. Physical and Cyber Security

1. Support administrative/legislative and funding for continued U.S. Environmental Protection Agency oversight of water system security in coordination with other federal and state agencies with expertise in security, including the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and the Chemical Security Analysis Center.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for enhanced physical security and cybersecurity for water and power infrastructure.



3. Support trade associations and coalition efforts to share information and develop standard guidance and best management practices to protect water and power critical infrastructure from cyber vulnerabilities.
4. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding that ensure Metropolitan's ability to reliably operate and maintain its facilities, infrastructure, and real estate assets, including rights of way, and to protect against encroachment.

D. Chemical Security

1. Support administrative/legislative actions and funding to improve supply chain reliability, achieve tax-exempt status for water treatment chemicals, and ensure access to water treatment chemicals.
2. Support administrative/legislative actions to ensure the continued use of gaseous chlorine to protect public health.