



News from EMWD

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For Immediate Release

Court order to reduce water supplies from Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

Perris, CA (September 6, 2007)—Highlighting the close relationship between the environment and water supplies, a two-to-three-inch fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is causing some big ripples that will affect water reliability for 25 million Californians, including residents in the Inland region.

In a ruling late Friday, Aug. 31, U.S. District Court Judge Oliver Wanger invalidated the biological basis that has guided operations of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project for decades. That means pumping water into the California Aqueduct and into the federal system may be reduced beginning next year by up to one-third, or two million acre-feet.

The recent court action was taken to protect an endangered fish species, the Delta smelt, from getting caught in pumps that serve water to two-thirds of the state's population from the Bay area, Central and Southern California. Those exports also irrigate 2.5 million acres of farmland. Written clarification of the judge's decision is expected within two months.

“This action brings home the message that the Delta is essentially broken from a reliability standpoint,” said David J. Slawson, president of the board of directors of Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD). “In reality,” he said, “the problem isn't so much about a lack

of water, but how water flows across the Delta to the California Aqueduct. Fortunately, that's something that can be fixed.

“One positive thing coming out of this decision” he continued, “is that we hope all major players agree to a comprehensive, long-term solution that addresses everyone's concerns. Then we will be able to move forward with infrastructure improvements that are critical to restoring our water reliability,” said Slawson.

Last January, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger introduced a \$5.9 billion comprehensive water plan. Among the features, it would develop additional surface and groundwater storage. It would protect communities against flooding and capture water from storms and snowmelt runoff. Infrastructure in the Delta would be improved, including a new water conveyance system that would better direct water to the pumps. Additional funds would be used for restoration projects in other watersheds, the Salton Sea and grants to communities for conservation projects.

In 2006, EMWD delivered 124,000 acre-feet of fresh water and depends on the Delta for about 68,000 acre-feet, generally 55 percent of the fresh water it serves. Water from the Delta comes to EMWD by way of Metropolitan Water District, one of the 27 public water agencies that form the State Water Contractors and represent communities in Northern, Central and Southern California.

According to Slawson, implications for customers served by EMWD are still to be determined as the details of the ruling are reviewed. But he added that all residents should become even more conscientious about their water use habits.

“I'm not recommending mandatory water rationing at this time,” he said “because we have a number of alternatives to get us through, not the least of which is our ability to use different supplies.” EMWD turns to groundwater for 20 percent or more of its supplies. The

remainder comes from MWD's Colorado River Aqueduct. In addition to fresh water, more than 21,000 acre-feet of recycled water were used last year for crops and other irrigation purposes.

And EMWD continues to cooperate with local agencies and private well owners when feasible.

Similarly, MWD has also made arrangements it can draw from, including water transfers, withdrawals from dry-year storage, maximizing activities on the Colorado River Aqueduct and emergency reserves.

Slawson added that "It's fortunate we and MWD have made progress since the 1987-92 drought. Now our region has much more water in storage that is reserved for emergencies. But it's only prudent for us to encourage increased conservation while we draw on those reserves because of both the fragility of the Delta's freshwater aquatic ecosystem and the cyclical nature of droughts in Southern California."

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EMWD is the freshwater, wastewater service and recycled water provider to a 555-square mile area from Moreno Valley southward along the I-215 corridor to Temecula and eastward to Hemet and San Jacinto. Approximately 650,000 people live and work in this area. In addition to its own water customers, EMWD supplements water to eight local water agencies and municipalities that have their own water departments. EMWD operates four water reclamation facilities and treats some 45 million gallons of wastewater daily. More information can be found at EMWD's web site www.emwd.org.