

September 2007

FACT SHEET (www.calwatercrisis.org)

Overview

Despite intense media attention and focus by the Governor and legislators, the public is largely unaware of the state's water problems. The [Association of California Water Agencies](http://www.calwatercrisis.org) (ACWA), a coalition of 450 public water agencies, has launched a statewide effort, entitled "California's Water: A Crisis We Can't Ignore," to educate Californians about critical challenges now confronting the state's water supply and delivery system.

Drawing on successful models for other key public policy issues, the education program will reach the public directly through television, radio and print advertising, as well as through the Internet and community outreach. The effort will begin in September and continue through 2007. Information on this program can be obtained at www.calwatercrisis.org.

The multi-million dollar program, funded by voluntary contributions from public water agencies throughout the state, is aimed at raising awareness among Californians of current and future water problems, including a deepening crisis in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta) and a recent court-ordered massive reduction in our statewide water supply.

Key Water Problems at a Glance

Thanks to a string of relatively wet years and the fact that water flows whenever the tap is turned on, the state's water problems are not readily apparent to the public. But many experts agree the state is facing some of the most significant water challenges seen in the last half-century:

- 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.
- California's water supply has been drastically reduced, impacting people, businesses and farms in Northern, Central and Southern California. In late August, a federal court 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.
- California's population is growing rapidly, but our statewide water storage and delivery system has not been significantly improved in 30 years.

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- Our 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.
- Aging Delta levees are at risk of a natural disaster that could cripple water deliveries for an extended period of time.
- 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.
- Significantly reduced supplies and growing water uncertainties already are causing some California farmers to fallow prime agricultural lands, hurting one of our state's most important industries.
- 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.
- While we have made great strides in water conservation and efficiency programs, the collective impacts of drought, climate change, increased population demands, court-ordered supply reductions and/or potential natural disasters mean that conservation alone will not solve this crisis...it's just simply not enough.

Why a Statewide Education Program Now?

Despite the seemingly high degree of interest among policy makers and the media, the public at large seems unaware of critical water problems facing California today and their potential impact on our economy, environment and quality of life.

The decision to launch a statewide education program follows ACWA's successful move last year to underwrite a multipart series on water for public television called, "California's Water." The series, produced by Huell Howser, has been airing on public television stations since April 2006, covering various aspects of California's water system.

ACWA hopes the education program will build on the "California's Water" series and previous outreach efforts to help the public become better educated about current and future water problems.

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More information on this education program can be obtained by visiting www.calwatercrisis.org.

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