

September 2007

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ([www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org))

### What is the Association of California Water Agencies' new public education program?

The [Association of California Water Agencies](http://www.calwatercrisis.org) (ACWA), a coalition of 450 public water agencies, has launched a statewide public education program, entitled "California's Water: A Crisis We Can't Ignore," to raise awareness among Californians of current and future water problems.

Californians rely on water to sustain our vibrant economy, keep our families healthy and maintain our quality of life. They need to be aware of pressing issues confronting our water system, including a deepening crisis in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta) and a recent court-ordered massive reduction in our statewide water supply.

Further information on the program can be obtained at [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org).

### What crisis is California's water system facing?

Many experts agree the state is facing some of the most significant water challenges seen in the last half-century. California's aging water supply and delivery system is facing multiple dire threats. Any one of these factors would be enough to jeopardize the state's water supply. But now, they have combined to place California's water supply and infrastructure, as well as critical environmental resources, in a state of crisis. Among the problems facing our state:

- 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.
- 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.

### **What does the recent federal court ruling mean for California's water supply?**

In an unprecedented move, U.S. District Court Judge Wanger ordered, on August 31, 2007, a massive reduction in water supplies from the state's two largest water delivery systems, the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP), to protect an endangered fish species, the Delta smelt, while updated federal permits are obtained.

While state and local water agencies are still analyzing the court ruling, an initial review by the California Department of Water Resources projects the reduction could be up to one-third (1/3) of the combined SWP/CVP water supplies, or two million acre-feet of water – one acre-foot is enough water for a family of five for a year. This is potentially the single largest court-ordered reduction in statewide water supply in California's history.

This significant reduction in water supply will be experienced in the Bay Area, Central and Southern California.

### **What about consumers of water – people, farms and businesses? How will the court ruling affect them?**

The most immediate impact of the recent court ruling will be in the agricultural community as farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, Inland Empire and San Diego regions are forced to abandon crop planting this coming winter and spring.

Urban water users will need to dramatically increase their conservation efforts during this critical time period – some local water agencies are calling for “unprecedented” levels of conservation, akin to those implemented during extensive drought. In some regions,

consumers may be asked for more stringent water restrictions, including rationing, and may experience increased costs.

Local public water agencies will be assessing direct impacts of the court ruling to their regions and customers, including potential impacts on local economic growth.

### **What are state leaders saying about this crisis?**

On the heels of the federal court ruling, state leaders weighed in with commentary about the mounting problems.

“Today’s federal court ruling to drastically cut Delta water exports is further proof that our water system is broken, unreliable and in crisis. Judge Oliver Wanger’s decision is a devastating blow to our water supply system and economy,” said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In addition, demonstrating the increasing urgency of the problem, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein recently hosted a bi-partisan water summit to call attention to the broken Delta system, joining a long list of water, conservation, agriculture, business, public health, public safety, government/local planning leaders and elected officials who have collectively voiced their concerns about California’s existing water system.

“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 would 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,” said U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein.

***Delta Summit, August 21, 2007***

### **What does this crisis mean to me?**

California cannot prosper without a safe and reliable supply of water. On the farm, in the workplace and around the home – the availability of clean and affordable water is the critical ingredient in sustaining the state’s thriving economy and world-renowned quality of life.

If our water supply and infrastructure systems fail, the impacts would be felt in homes and businesses across the state. Such a failure could trigger widespread water shortages and mandatory rationing, with serious impacts on our quality of life, environment, agricultural production and general economy.

### **Can't we just implement more conservation?**

While we have made great strides in water conservation and efficiency programs, they are simply not enough. We cannot conserve our way out of this crisis. Yes, more conservation is needed and is an extremely valuable tool in the overall water management tool box. However, the collective impacts of court-ordered water supply reductions, drought, climate change, increased population demands and/or potential natural disasters mean that conservation alone will not solve this crisis. The public needs to understand this important distinction.

### **Why is your organization launching this program now?**

Despite the seemingly high degree of interest among policy makers and intense news coverage, 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.

When the state's water supply is threatened, as it is by this immediate crisis, we are obligated to inform and educate the public about those threats. As the public agencies responsible for delivering water on a daily basis, we have an obligation to inform our customers of issues that could affect their water supplies.

### **How do you intend to reach the public?**

ACWA's statewide education program will reach the public directly through television, radio and print advertising, as well as the Internet and community outreach.

### **Where can I see/hear the program's television & radio ads?**

Our ads will be aired on local and cable television channels and radio stations in media markets throughout the state, and may also be viewed at our Web site, [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org).

In addition to paid advertising, our program will be developing and distributing an informational, five-minute DVD/video for public dissemination.

### **Is this program designed to advocate or lobby for any new policies on water?**

No, this is strictly a public education program to inform California residents of the severe crisis facing our water system and the impacts it will have on all aspects of our lives, from the farm to the workplace to the kitchen faucet.

### **How long will this program run? Who is funding the program?**

The multi-million dollar education program, funded by voluntary contributions from public water agencies throughout the state, is currently scheduled to run through the end of 2007.

### **Are there program materials available for my organization?**

Yes, your organization may download educational materials from [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org), or contact us to receive information by mail. Partnering with statewide, regional and community-based organizations is a critical element of our outreach program. If you represent an organization or business that would like to help us spread this information, please let us know and we can provide bulk supplies of our materials for your membership or key events. You can also post our advertisements and DVD/video to your organization's Web sites.

### **What is ACWA?**

ACWA is the largest coalition of public water agencies in the country. The statewide organization, based in Sacramento, is composed of 450 public agencies that collectively supply 90% of the water delivered to cities, farms and businesses throughout the state. ACWA has been a leader in California water issues since 1910. Its primary mission is to assist its members in promoting the development, management and beneficial use of water in an environmentally balanced manner.

### **Has ACWA spearheaded other similar education efforts?**

Yes, ACWA has consistently worked to educate policy makers, opinion leaders and the news media about water issues through a variety of means.

Most recently, ACWA has brought general water information to the public through a multipart series for public television called "California's Water." Underwritten by ACWA and produced by Huell Howser, the series has been airing on public television stations since April 2006, covering various aspects of California's water system.

Now, ACWA is building on its previous efforts by directly reaching the public through television, radio and print advertising through this statewide education program.

### **Are local water agencies running their own public education efforts?**

Yes, local water agencies are running a variety of programs on the significance of this crisis, conservation efforts and other issues that affect their local and regional service areas.

### **How can I get more information?**

You may get more information on the program by visiting [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org) or contacting Jennifer Persike, ACWA's Director of Strategic Coordination and Public Affairs, at (916) 441-4545.

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