



Our Region's Trusted Water Leader **San Diego County Water Authority**

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News Release

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Water Authority Welcomes New MWD Board Chair Adán Ortega

Water agencies together face challenging issues

January 26, 2023 – The San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors today welcomed Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board Chair Adán Ortega, Jr. by hosting a reception for him to meet San Diego County's community, civic and business leaders.

Ortega took the helm of MWD's Board on January 10 as the first Latino chair in the district's 95-year history. In a presentation today during the Water Authority's formal Board meeting, Ortega focused on shared challenges and opportunities the two water wholesalers face in the era of climate change.

"Past conflicts aside, I see the San Diego County experience as a model that Metropolitan and other water agencies will need to consider as we confront the changed climate. The San Diego region recognized earlier than many – more than 20 years ago – the need to invest in water supply and infrastructure improvements to ensure reliability," said Ortega, who made formal comments during the Water Authority's Board meeting. "The need for these investments has only become more urgent as the impacts of climate change undermine both Bay-Delta and Colorado River water supplies."

Ortega also noted that "San Diego's investments have come at a cost in the form of higher water rates, but the result has been protection against drought," including the drought that has threatened water supplies across California for the past three years.

"We can't escape the reality of increasing water rates among our member agencies and Metropolitan, just as San Diego had to do," Ortega said. "With climate change, we need to envision a new class of water infrastructure

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-- Mel Katz, Chair, Water Authority
Board of Directors

and management. San Diego’s leaders and ratepayers have reckoned with rate increases to keep water flowing even with critical shortages in traditional sources of water. That’s the definition of resiliency.”

Ortega has represented the City of San Fernando on the MWD board since March 2021. He is the principal at Ortega Strategies group, a public and government relations firm based in Fullerton, and he served as Metropolitan’s vice president of external affairs from 1999 to 2005. Before representing San Fernando, he served as the City of Fullerton’s representative on the MWD Board.

As chair, Ortega said he places a strong emphasis on agency ethics and the values of diversity, equity and inclusion for Metropolitan’s board and staff. He has appointed the most diverse leadership slate in MWD’s history, including appointment of leadership positions to three of the Water Authority’s four delegates including a board vice chair and chairmanship of the agency’s finance committee. The Water Authority fourth delegate – Lois Fong-Sakai – was recently elected by her peers to serve as MWD Board secretary and parliamentarian.

“With decades of experience in government service, Adán is a proven consensus builder who is ideally suited to lead Metropolitan’s diverse 26 member agencies during a period of historic transitions impacting water supply and the environment both in MWD’s service area and the Southwest,” said Water Authority Board Chair Mel Katz.

The Water Authority relies on MWD for about 13% of its water supplies, along with transporting water through the Colorado River Aqueduct to San Diego County. The Water Authority and MWD are working together on critical issues of drought and water supply planning as well as daily coordination of water deliveries.

“Water challenges in the West will continue to grow,” said Katz, “but I am confident that working together with MWD and its member agencies we can meet the needs of Southern California for generations to come.”

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The San Diego County Water Authority sustains a \$268 billion regional economy and the quality of life for 3.3 million residents through a multi-decade water supply diversification plan, major infrastructure investments and forward-thinking policies that promote fiscal and environmental responsibility. A public agency created in 1944, the Water Authority delivers wholesale water supplies to 24 retail water providers, including cities, special districts and a military base.



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