



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recent water transfers from Loveland Reservoir provide ecological benefit

Chula Vista, CA – In fall 2022 and winter 2023, Sweetwater Authority (Authority) transferred storage water from Loveland Reservoir to Sweetwater Reservoir to meet customer drinking water needs. Years of prolonged drought conditions created a need to transfer the water to Sweetwater Reservoir, where it can be treated and distributed to Authority customers at a lower cost than importing water. The water that leaves Loveland Reservoir is conveyed via the natural Sweetwater River course, a length of approximately 17 miles. Along the way, the river traverses natural habitats, including both state and federal ecological wildlife preserves.



Arroyo toad neonate, Sweetwater River, June 2023

The Authority closely monitors the water transfer to avoid any negative effects to the natural environment. Following the recent water transfers, the Authority's biologist, working in conjunction with the US Geological Survey – Western Ecological Research Center (USGS-WERC), conducted field inspections of the Sweetwater River where the transfers occurred. Survey results this past spring found an abundance of native amphibians, specifically toads and frogs. In particular, tadpoles and neonatal arroyo toads, or toadlets, were seen in very large numbers. The arroyo toad, a federally endangered species and California Species of Special Concern, appears to be doing particularly well.

Observations from the Authority and USGS-WERC team found early wet-season water transfers that mimic heavy storm flows provide ecological benefit to the river and wildlife that use the river to breed. The transfer washes out organic matter and nutrients for improved river water quality, facilitates sedimentation processes that are natural in rivers, and flushes non-native fish and other invasive species that can outcompete and prey on native reptiles and amphibians in the river. While not knowing how much rain and runoff would be received this past wet season, the preceding fall and winter early season water transfers "pre-wet" the dry river bed and allowed for a prolonged period of surface flows where amphibians, such as the arroyo toad, could thrive.

"I'm proud of our efforts to meet the water needs of our rate payers and in manner that benefits the natural environment," said Hector Martinez, Board Chair. "This is a perfect example of our mission statement in that we're achieving a balanced approach to human and environmental needs."

The water transferred secured an additional year's worth of local water supplies, saving the Authority and its ratepayers approximately \$11 million in costs associated with purchasing water.

Sweetwater Authority is a public water agency providing safe, reliable water to National City, Chula Vista and Bonita.

www.sweetwater.org