

Where does our water come from?

Given the lack of annual local rain and natural resources, Vallecitos' wholesalers must import water to the region from two primary places: the Colorado River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Since San Marcos does not have a local water supply, Vallecitos must import 100 percent of its water.



The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta

Why is there a water shortage?

California is one of five states, as well as Mexico, to receive water from the Colorado River. Each gets an allotted annual share, but supplies have been limited due to the river experiencing drought the past eight years.

Until recently, Northern California was in a drought as well. Although storms have brought rains and snow levels closer to normal, water from this source continues to be strained due to increased judicial regulations.

Starting in 2007, an effort to protect the threatened Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta smelt that were getting caught in the water delivery pumps resulted in court-ordered delivery restrictions that would impact water deliveries to our region. In 2009 alone, pumping restrictions resulted in a loss of 290,000 acre feet of water – enough to supply 554,000 homes annually.

Why are the Delta smelt important?

Scientists say that the smelt are an indicator species that show the health of the entire Bay-Delta ecosystem. The smelt act as a “canary in the coal mine” and are representative of a much larger decline in other native Delta species, such as certain species of salmon, steelhead and sturgeon. Scientists are also concerned that a small population of killer whales may also be threatened, as they depend upon some of these fish for their survival.

Unfortunately, there are no easy fixes for the Delta due to the extremely complicated nature of dealing with a river system that has been so extensively altered for over a century. The pumping restrictions are just one symptom of the problems facing the Delta. Other factors such as the aging infrastructure that is used to convey water through the Delta, pollution, and the introduction of non-native species have led to sharp declines in ecosystem health and water supply reliability.

State and federal officials are currently working on creating a Delta habitat conservation plan to protect the smelt and other species, but until a solution is found one thing is clear: “Californians need to become less dependent on water supply from the Delta because of its fragile state” - a panel of experts appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger to address this issue.



The near-extinct Delta smelt is about 2-3 inches long. Populations have been reduced by 90 percent in the last 20 years.

What does this mean to you?

Vallecitos' water wholesalers have cut water deliveries, which translates to an overall 10 percent curtailment for Vallecitos customers (except frugal users who use 5 or less units of water per month). Vallecitos will incur significant penalties if customers do not meet the required 10 percent reduction. As a result, Vallecitos implemented drought rates which are structured to penalize excessive users and minimize impacts to average and below average users.

Would issuing a moratorium on new construction

change the outlook? Issuing a construction moratorium will have a minimal effect on water demand because most of the growth being experienced in the region is births over deaths. Furthermore, Vallecitos is not a land-planning agency like city and county governments. Under its government code designating Vallecitos as a county water agency, we have limited power and do not have authority to be involved in the land planning approval process.

What are Vallecitos' wholesalers doing to help?

One of Vallecitos' wholesalers, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, is actively involved in supporting actions to resolve the problems in the Delta. Our other wholesaler, the San Diego County Water Authority, continues to work with other water agencies and leaders in Sacramento to make immediate fixes and implement long-term measures that will restore water supply reliability and sustain the Bay-Delta's ecosystem.

Vallecitos' wholesalers are also in the middle of a source diversification program that will make Southern California less dependent on the Delta and Colorado River. Some alternatives include new water transfer agreements and increased conservation and recycled water use.

Additional Resources

Delta Issues:

Association of California Water Agencies
www.acwa.com

Bay Delta Conservation Plan
www.baydeltaconservationplan.com

Governor's Delta Vision
Blue Ribbon Task Force
www.deltavision.ca.gov

Drought Restrictions:

Vallecitos Water District
www.vwd.org

Vallecitos' Water Wholesalers:

Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California
www.mwdh2o.com

San Diego County Water authority
www.sdcwa.org

Photos courtesy of the California
Department of Water Resources



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Vallecitos' Role in Creating a Sustainable Water Supply...

What is Vallecitos doing to help?

Vallecitos has been very proactive to help solve the current water situation. Its efforts include:

- * **Water Conservation Programs:** Vallecitos regularly offers rebates, incentives, and free landscape irrigation audits aimed at helping customers conserve water.
- * **Seawater Desalination:** Assuming all necessary permits and agreements continue to move forward, Vallecitos customers should receive desalinated water coming through their faucets as early as 2012. This drought-proof source may eventually account for up to half of the water that Vallecitos provides and reduce reliance on imported supplies.
- * **Wastewater Recycling:** By increasing capacity at Vallecitos' water reclamation facility, up to 72 percent of the wastewater generated within District boundaries can now be recycled for alternate uses such as irrigation. Recycled water offsets the amount of water that needs to be imported into the region.
- * **State-of-the-Art Water Storage:** This past decade, Vallecitos upgraded its operational and emergency storage. The addition of the 33-million gallon and 40-million gallon tanks in Twin Oaks Valley has provided a much-needed improvement to Vallecitos' previous open, unlined reservoir that allowed water losses due to evaporation and ground seepage.
- * **Day-to-Day Operations:** Vallecitos is very attentive to repairing District water line leaks and uses California-friendly plants at all of its facilities.



What can you do to help? To ensure that future generations have sufficient water supplies, conservation is the key! For conservation information, contact Vallecitos' conservation office at (760) 744-0460 or go to www.vwd.org.

What Happened to Our Water Supplies?

