

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE

HYBRID LEGISLATIVE HEARING

May 12, 2022

2:00 p.m. ET

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 263, H.R. 3081, H.R. 5880, H.R. 6238, H.R. 6369, H.R. 7612, H.R. 7632, and
H.R. 7633

Questions for the Record for Ms. Sandy Kerl, General Manager, San Diego County Water Authority

Questions from Rep. Mike Levin, CA

1. Can you discuss how increased investments in research and development as envisioned by my bill could help further improve efficiency, lower costs, and minimize ecological impacts for existing desalination plants like the Carlsbad plant?

HR 7612 directs the Secretary of the Interior to prioritize, among other things, research and development projects that would aim to minimize the impacts of desalination on aquatic life and coastal ecosystems. The Authority is currently working with our private partner on a water intake improvement project that would do just that- further minimize impacts to aquatic life. Legislative efforts like the one before us today aim to make desalination more accessible and more affordable which is a goal the Water Authority whole heartedly supports. During this time of drought, it is imperative to continue to expand the use of technologies to provide reliable, clean drinking water. The legislation providing additional funds for research will benefit projects like the Authority's project by looking at different technologies that are less expensive and minimize impacts. Affordability and accessibility are important components that will make desalination projects successful and ensure reliable supplies.

2. As communities like ours continue to face historic drought and other impacts of climate change, why is providing federal funding to help communities develop reliable, local water sources, including through desalination and water recycling, so critical?

The current drought highlights the need for reliable, local water sources. Many areas throughout California currently do not have adequate supplies to meet all of the needs of their communities. Desalination and water recycling projects provide a reliable supply for customers during these critical times and as droughts continue. For more than 70 years, the San Diego County Water Authority has imported water to meet the San Diego region's needs through times of drought, economic expansion, and population growth. A severe drought in the early 1990s forced the region to confront the fact that continuing to provide safe and reliable water demanded a diverse portfolio of supplies instead of a near-total reliance on a single source. The

Claude “Bud” Lewis Carlsbad Desalination project and our decades-long conservation efforts are major factors in why we continue to have reliable water supplies for our ratepayers even in the midst of this historic drought. Significant investments in local water supplies, to include surface storage, groundwater, water recycling and potable reuse, and of course seawater desalination are why our region has been able to keep the faucets running in our service area even during this historic drought. Federal investment in new water supply projects like desalination can help build more resilient systems that maximize our limited water supplies.