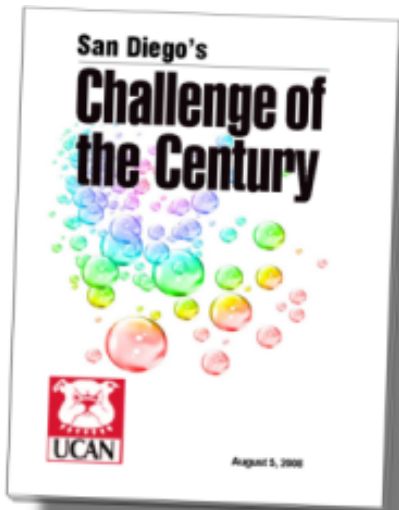


San Diego's Challenge of the Century Report:

Cutting edge strategies to make San Diego the world's most water-wise region



Published in August 2008, this report asks: **Is San Diego up to the challenge of the century?** San Diego faces a clear and present danger. The decisions we make about water today will be felt by our children for the next 100 years. Leadership, crisis management, and smart long-term solutions are urgently needed.

When it comes to infrastructure issues such as energy, communications, water and housing, San Diego, like so many other regions, has lots of controversies and precious few areas of regional consensus. However, water will prove to be the topic of this century. In the face of a recent drought and long-term predictions of reduced snow pack, San Diego policy makers have begun to slowly grapple with the realities of and the ramifications of a dwindling water supply. **And the convergence of this restricted supply along with the decades of unchecked growth has led the region to an inexorable coming-to-terms moment.**

UCAN recommends a set of measures that need to be considered by the region's policymakers that include:

- **Pricing strategies:** San Diego water districts must provide customers with clearer economic signals through better rate design and rate incentive programs;
- **Community involvement:** Local communities must be engaged to help with enforcement of water usage rules
- **Linkage of resources:** Use the link between the region's energy and water resources to create an integrated approach to "harvesting" both energy and water resources in conjunction with SDG&E
- **Prescriptive actions:** Some water uses must be severely restricted. New water users must adopt a zero net-usage principle
- **Educate consumers:** Instilling an ethic in San Diego water customers that encourages water thriftiness and discourages water waste
- **Water supply:** Water efficiency, reuse and creative water transfers represent the most promising sources of new water for the region
- **Alter practices:** Given that landscape irrigation is the single largest use of water in California's urban areas, special attention needs to be given to altering irrigation practices in San Diego.

As noted by the County Water Authority, in 2007, Sierra snowpack supplying the State Water Project fell to 30 percent of its normal values and a federal court issued a ruling that will reduce pumping from the Bay-Delta to San Diego County. The Colorado River system is experiencing an eight-year drought and locally, San Diego received only 37 percent of its normal rainfall in 2007 and is in the driest two-year period since record keeping began in 1802.



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Most informed commentators and policymakers agree that **San Diegans must get serious about water conservation**. With water districts calling for voluntary water usage cutbacks, this has become an inarguably serious matter. However, there appears to be little agreement upon how to achieve those cutbacks.

The pressing challenge to this region is how to cost-effectively achieve an ethic of wiser water use amongst its citizenry. This report examines the **true constraints** placed on San Diego's water supply, what **best practices** are appropriate and **what we can learn** from other communities who are achieving measures of success with wiser water use.

San Diego County is particularly vulnerable as approximately 90% of the water consumed here is imported via pipelines and aqueducts from the Colorado River via the Colorado River Aqueduct and from Northern California via the Bay Delta and Central Valley Projects. The effects of increasing drought conditions, and loss of watershed-holding capacity due to the fire events of 2003 and 2007, are all contributing to increasing reliance on imported water.

UCAN offers a paper designed to further spark the local dialogue about how the San Diego County Water Authority, water districts and customers can implement innovative and effective measures to better manage this essential resource. UCAN has conducted a **survey of water efficiency measures** used throughout the world and has chosen some of the most successful conservation and reuse measures deployed elsewhere. We also offer some **original approaches** that warrant consideration by local policy makers. Most of the suggestions are focused upon water usage, rather than enhancing water supply. However, the differentiation between the two is largely illusory – **every gallon of water saved is a very low-cost gallon earned**.



UCAN views this matter as a challenge to San Diego. As the self-proclaimed "America's Finest City", San Diego and the surrounding region has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in water conservation, in keeping with its claim to being among America's elite regions. **As our analysis shows, San Diego has not yet met that challenge.**

Calls for voluntary conservation are largely ineffectual. Rationing is inherently inequitable and could result in unintended consequences, as well as political and social backlash. UCAN suggests that neither of these tools should be relied upon.

Instead, UCAN offers a set of strategies and policy recommendations that need to be considered by the region's policymakers.

Read the full report online at www.ucan.org

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