Testimony of Bud Pocklington
Chairman of the Governing Board
Sweetwater Authority
Before the House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
H.R. 4579
To amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in phase one of the South San Diego County Water Reclamation Project, and for other purposes

March 18, 2010

Chair Napolitano, members of the Subcommittee, and staff, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this very important issue.

My name is Bud Pocklington, and I am the Chairman of the Governing Board of the Sweetwater Authority, a public water agency, which provides drinking water to the cities of National City and Chula Vista, and the unincorporated community of Bonita in San Diego County, California. Our service areas are shown on the map before you. Together with our partners, the Otay Water District and the City of Chula Vista, we serve a population of about 400,000 people from a combination of two local reservoirs, desalinated groundwater, and imported water sources.

I want to thank you for holding this hearing on H.R. 4579 to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in phase one of the South San Diego County Water Reclamation Project.

I also want to thank Congressman Bob Filner for sponsoring this important bill that will provide much needed additional local water supplies to our region and improve the quality of our natural resources.

Southern California and the San Diego Region must reduce dependence on imported water*, and* the South San Diego County Water Reclamation Project is a comprehensive and coordinated approach by public water agencies to sustainably use the vast groundwater resources of the San Diego Formation. Current estimates indicate that the San Diego Formation holds upward of 1,000,000 acre-feet (or 326 billion gallons) of water, but currently produces only about 4 million gallons per day of desalinated brackish water and 2 million gallons per day of potable well water within Sweetwater Authority's service area.

By utilizing these local water sources, the Project will:

- Reduce dependence on imported water by about 12,600 acre-feet (or 4 billion gallons) per year. In combination with other water management actions Sweetwater Authority will produce almost 90 percent of our average annual water needs, 13,700 acre-feet, from local sources once this project is implemented; the project will mitigate the impacts of drought and reduced snowpack;

- Mitigate the potential impacts of planned or emergency water supply interruption;

- Minimize supply and environmental impacts to imported water sources, the Colorado River, and the Bay-Delta;

- Employ the highest technology available;

- Be cost-competitive with imported water. The average cost per acre–foot of water produced by the Project will be about $1,500. Imported water currently averages about $814 per acre-foot but is independently forecast to reach $1,600 in the San Diego Region over the next 8-10 years;

- Have a long expected operating lifetime of 50 years or more; and

- Help provide stability to a disadvantaged community where unemployment is currently 14%. About 50 new jobs would be created over a period of 2-3 years by construction of these Facilities.

The U.S. Geological Survey has conducted a multi-year study of the San Diego Formation as a local water source. The Project would utilize the vast San Diego Formation as a source of readily treatable brackish groundwater. Reclaiming brackish groundwater is much more cost-efficient than sea water due to drastically lower energy costs for the process.

The San Diego Formation, a natural underground aquifer, lies deep below the central and south San Diego Bay area. The depth of the porous aquifer, composed of sand and ancient seabed, ranges from 200 feet to over 4,000 feet. The geographic area stretches from Highway 8 southward into Mexico, and westward beneath the Pacific Ocean, an area of approximately 125 square miles. The U.S. Geological Survey research is determining the sustainability of long-term use of the water. The map before you shows the area of the San Diego Formation, and the locations of the proposed and existing project Facilities.

The projects will use proven and cost-effective technology.

- A Regional Concentrate Conveyance Facility would serve existing and future desalting and water reclamation facilities. The conveyance facility pipeline, running north to south, would discharge to the existing South Bay Ocean Outfall (See Map).

- A groundwater desalination facility in the Otay River Valley could provide access to the San Diego Formation through development of a desalination plant of similar design and production capacity to the existing and proven Sweetwater Authority's Reynolds Desalination Facility. This location would provide an additional water source to serve one of the most rapidly growing areas in the San Diego region. (Also shown on the map)

Together, these facilities would assure a total of 12,600 acre-feet (or 4 billion gallons) per year of local water supply. 3,800 acre-feet will be produced by the proposed Otay River Groundwater Desalination Facility. The brine line component of this project will allow production at the existing Reynolds Facility to be increased to 8,800 acre-feet, with the associated brine to be discharged through the Concentrate Conveyance Facility component of this project.

In addition, the Conveyance Facility will allow future water to be produced at the planned City of Chula Vista facility and potentially other water reclamation or recycling facilities that may be developed in the region.

Feasibility studies have been conducted for these facilities using a combination of local and California Proposition 50 funds. These are now under review by the Bureau of Reclamation, and their evaluation is expected in 90 days.

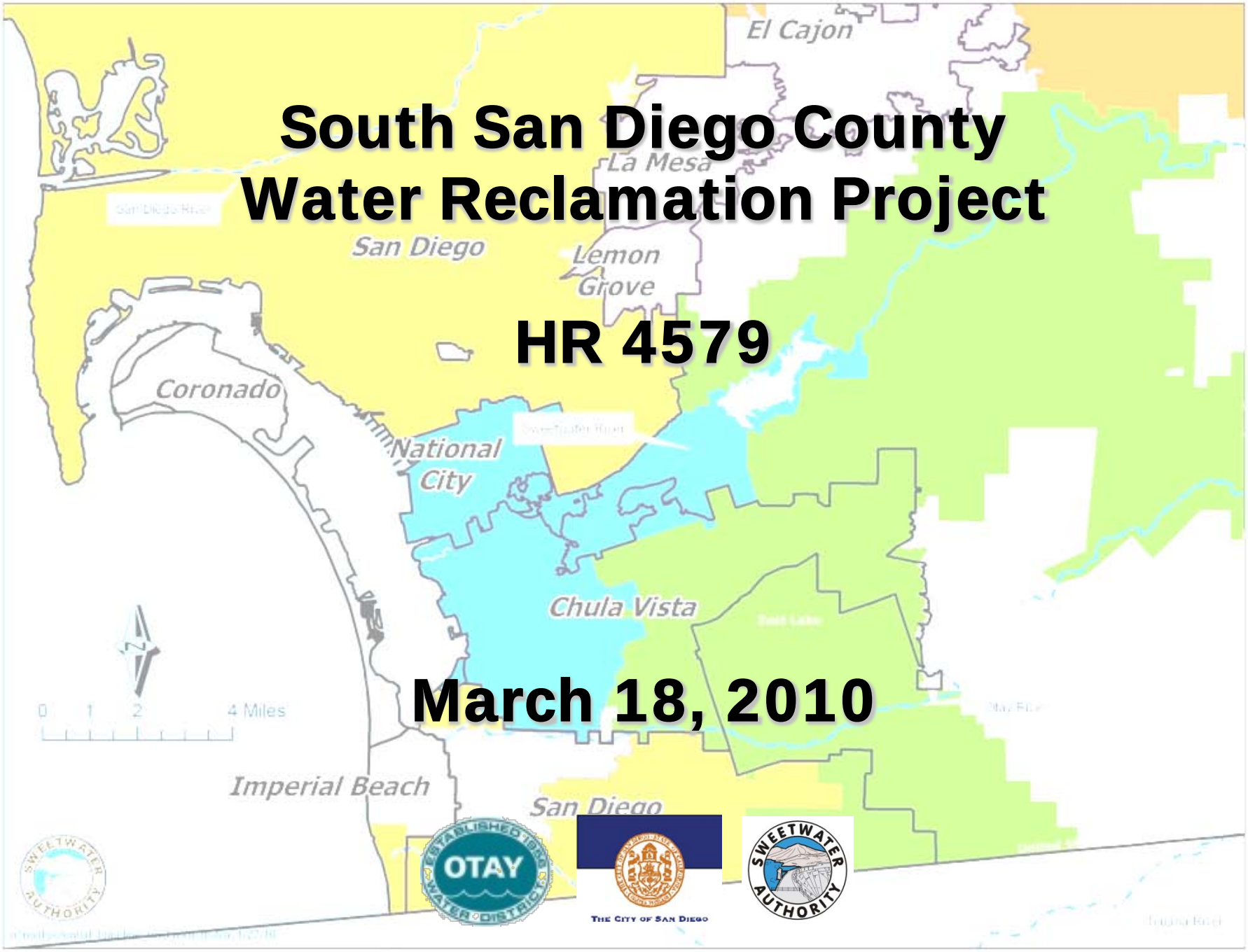
Cost estimates from these studies place the cost of the Concentrate Conveyance Facility at $55 million, and the Otay River Desalination Facility at $67 million.

Sweetwater Authority and our partners take our role as water supply providers and managers for our area very seriously and significant local resources have been devoted to this mission.

The Authority is unique in San Diego County in that it is able to provide a sizable portion of its water demand through the use of local water sources. Two large reservoirs, Sweetwater and Loveland, and a water treatment plant are operated to maximize local and imported water supplies as well as provide for emergency storage. Groundwater sources are also utilized through a series of wells and a desalination plant. By maximizing available local water and implementing conservation measures the Authority has greatly reduced our dependence on imported water.

We are always looking for water supply and water supply reliability solutions. The local brackish groundwater and recycled municipal wastewater that will be supported by H.R. 4579 will be a tool that enables us to achieve this water supply, and we very strongly urge your support for this legislation.

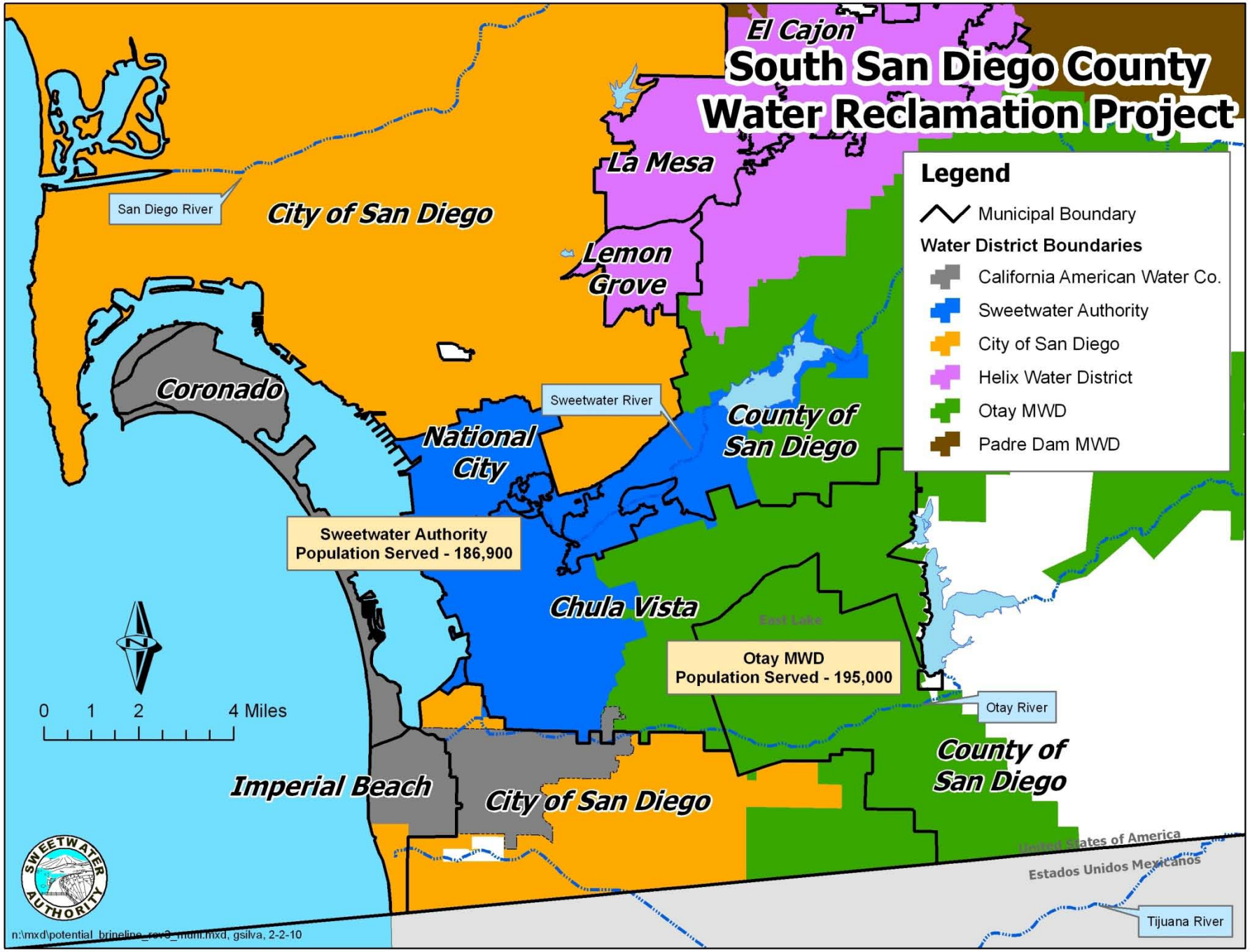
Thank you again, Madame Chair, for your time and consideration, and I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

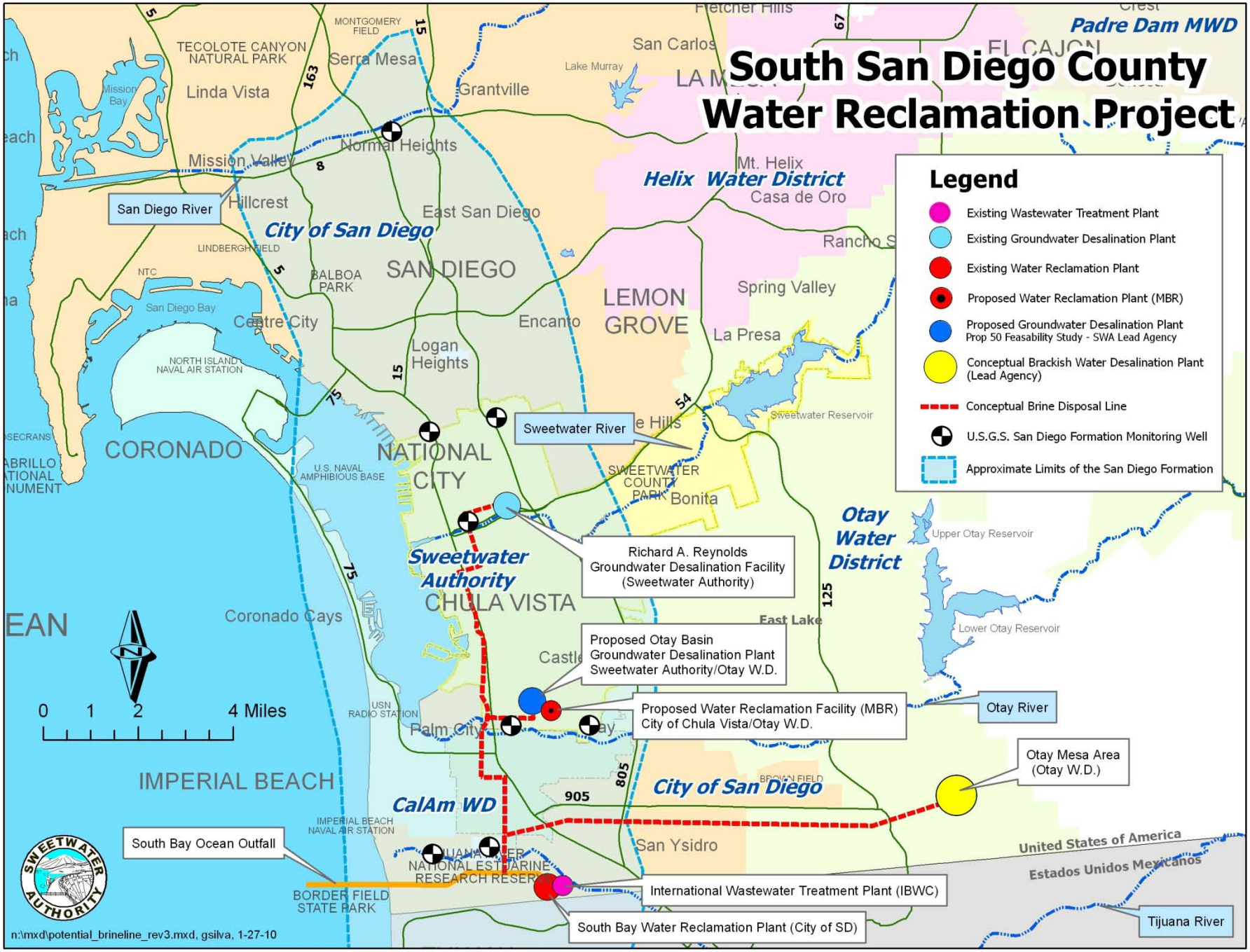


South San Diego County Water Reclamation Project

HR 4579

March 18, 2010


South San Diego County Water Reclamation Project
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
City of San Diego
San Diego River
Coronado
National City
Sweetwater River
County of San Diego
Chula Vista
East Lake
Imperial Beach
City of San Diego
County of San Diego
Otay River
Tijuana River
United States of America
Estados Unidos Mexicanos
Legend
Municipal Boundary
Water District Boundaries
California American Water Co.
Sweetwater Authority
City of San Diego
Helix Water District
Otay MWD
Padre Dam MWD
Sweetwater Authority
Population Served - 186,900
Otay MWD
Population Served - 195,000
N
0 1 2 4 Miles
SWEETWATER AUTHORITY
n:\mxd\potential_brineline_rev8_muni.mxd, gsilva, 2-2-10


South San Diego County
Water Reclamation Project
Legend
Existing Wastewater Treatment Plant
Existing Groundwater Desalination Plant
Existing Water Reclamation Plant
Proposed Water Reclamation Plant (MBR)
Proposed Groundwater Desalination Plant
Prop 50 Feasability Study - SWA Lead Agency
Conceptual Brackish Water Desalination Plant
(Lead Agency)
Conceptual Brine Disposal Line
U.S.G.S. San Diego Formation Monitoring Well
Approximate Limits of the San Diego Formation
San Diego River
Sweetwater River
Richard A. Reynolds
Groundwater Desalination Facility
(Sweetwater Authority)
Proposed Otay Basin
Groundwater Desalination Plant
Sweetwater Authority/Otay W.D.
Proposed Water Reclamation Facility (MBR)
City of Chula Vista/Otay W.D.
Otay Mesa Area
(Otay W.D.)
South Bay Ocean Outfall
International Wastewater Treatment Plant (IBWC)
South Bay Water Reclamation Plant (City of SD)
Otay River
Tijuana River
Padre Dam MWD
Helix Water District
City of San Diego
Sweetwater Authority
Otay Water District
CalAm WD
City of San Diego
United States of America
Estados Unidos Mexicanos
TECOLOTE CANYON NATURAL PARK
Linda Vista
Serra Mesa
Grantville
Lake Murray
San Carlos
Mission Valley
Normal Heights
Hillcrest
East San Diego
Mt. Helix
Casa de Oro
Spring Valley
LEMON GROVE
La Presa
Encanto
Logan Heights
SAN DIEGO
BALBOA PARK
Centre City
NORTH ISLAND NAVAL AIR STATION
CORONADO
NATIONAL CITY
U.S. NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE
SWEETWATER COUNTY PARK
Bonita
Sweetwater Reservoir
Upper Otay Reservoir
Lower Otay Reservoir
East Lake
CHULA VISTA
Coronado Cays
Palm City
IMPERIAL BEACH
IMPERIAL BEACH NAVAL AIR STATION
San Ysidro
BORDER FIELD STATE PARK
0 1 2 4 Miles
n:\mxd\potential_brineline_rev3.mxd, gsilva, 1-27-10