

TESTIMONY OF MARK A. PISANO
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BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
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- Introduction
 - Good morning, my name is Mark Pisano, Executive Director of the Southern California Association of Governments.
 - The SCAG region is the largest metropolitan area in the country, encompassing six counties, 184 cities, and 38,000 square miles. This region, which is the size of Ohio, had approximately 16 million people in 2000.
 - The region now serves about 40% of its water demand from local supplies and imports about 60%, mainly from the State Water Project, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and the Colorado River Aqueduct. Potable water supplies are over 70% imported. Actions taken all over the state – indeed, throughout the western states – affect the water supplies potentially available for the SCAG region. As of 1995, the region's total annual water demand was about 10 million acre feet, compared with a statewide usage of about 80 million acre feet.
- Factors that create challenges for Southern California's water supply
 - **Southern California's unique economic strength.** In GDP terms, the state of California has the 6th largest economy in the world; Southern California alone has the 12th largest economy.
 - **Southern California's tremendous growth.** The region has already seen dramatic growth; twenty-six of the region's cities more than doubled in population between 1980 and 1999. This trend is projected to continue. The region will grow by about 40% in both population and employment by 2025, adding two cities the size of Chicago for a total population nearing 23 million. During the same period, trade volumes through the region's ports are expected

to nearly triple, up to a total goods value of more than \$660 billion. [See Table 1 attached to testimony.]

- **The SCAG region's unique demographic diversity**, which means that water resources and related services must be assured in an equitable manner for a variety of different ethnic, socio-economic, and age groups.
- **The concentration of growth, especially residential development, in the outlying areas of the SCAG region**, which creates new demands for local water supply infrastructure. At the same time, the SCAG region is nearing build-out in terms of privately owned, developable land.
- **The state's uncertain future with regard to energy cost and supply**. Water resources are both a source of energy supply, through hydroelectric generation, and a source of energy demand for pumping, transport, and delivery, as well as for wastewater management.
- **The state's uncertain future with respect to climate**. Southern California is by nature an arid region with unpredictable rainfall. Drought years, whether local or statewide, likewise cannot be predicted. Despite the dry climate, single storm events can be so severe that the region has responded to flood concerns by channelizing many natural waterways to speed runoff. However, in many areas these steps have served to minimize infiltration of storm water back into groundwater supplies.
- **The possibility of global warming adds to the climate uncertainty**, and could further diminish rainfall even in wetter states like Washington and Oregon, whose water in turn provides energy to California.
- **Southern California's history of intense agricultural and industrial development**, combined with its extensive coastal exposure, means that groundwater resources are frequently degraded, requiring treatment before they can be used.
- **The region's unique concentration of biodiversity**, with 70% of the state's listed threatened or endangered species in Southern California. Southern California is one of the

most imperiled bio-regions in the world, making our decisions about water resources even more critical to the region's environmental sustainability.

- **The fragmented nature of governmental responsibility for water resources and water quality in the region and in the state.** This makes planning difficult and underlines the critical importance of communication, of multi-stakeholder efforts, and of multi-purpose solutions to the region's water supply and water quality problems.
- Actions taken in the region to improve water supply, quality, and reliability
 - **Regular water demand forecasting.** The service area of the Metropolitan Water District of Los Angeles covers most of the SCAG region. Several smaller agencies provide water to other portions of the region's six counties. These water suppliers model population growth, together with conservation measures, anticipated climate conditions, and price, among other factors, to project water demand and identify possible supply shortfalls. SCAG has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Metropolitan Water District to provide projections of population, employment, and housing growth that are a cornerstone of water supply forecasts.
 - **Dry-weather shortfalls have been projected.** Working closely with the Metropolitan Water District, SCAG has produced a long-range water resources plan as part of a regional comprehensive plan. This plan projected water supply shortfalls in dry years, as summarized in the attached charts. Several strategies were identified in that plan to address these shortfalls, and these strategies are being implemented through SCAG's cooperative relationships with the region's water agencies.
 - **SCAG's role in regional project review and planning.** SCAG uses its formal intergovernmental review authority to review water infrastructure projects for consistency with anticipated regional growth patterns. Through programs such as the regional Growth Visioning initiative and related efforts, SCAG strives to integrate water planning with growth

planning.

- **Adoption of best management practices.** Metropolitan Water District has adopted sixteen practices aimed at water conservation, including such measures as water audits, new and retrofit plumbing standards, landscape water conservation requirements, conservation incentives, and others.
- **Conservation of stormwater runoff.** Several parts of the SCAG region have been able to take advantage of spreading basins and gravel pits to allow artificial recharge of underground aquifers. For example, Orange County Water District's Water Factory 21 produces 15 million gallons a day of blended reclaimed water which is recharged into aquifers to serve as a barrier against seawater infiltration.
- **Integrated Resources Planning by MWD.** This effort by MWD was undertaken with the goals of providing long-term water supply reliability while balancing investments between local and imported sources and protecting the financial security of MWD and its member agencies.
- **Water reclamation.** Reclaimed water supplies are primarily useful for groundwater recharge, irrigation of greenbelts and golf courses, and industrial purposes.
- **Conjunctive use of groundwater resources.** These efforts allow storage of water in underground aquifers through stormwater infiltration and spreading of imported surface water during wet years or rainy seasons. Water can be pumped out of these reserves during dry periods to meet peak water demands.
- **New storage facilities.** Metropolitan Water District's new Diamond Valley Reservoir provides 800,000 million acre feet of new storage for Southern California, and is also producing much-needed electricity.
- **Groundwater recovery.** Degraded groundwater supplies are being recovered and treated, where cost-effective.
- **Numerous private initiatives in watershed planning, conservancies, and water**

conservation. Non-governmental organizations throughout the region are showing initiative in conserving land, developing runoff models, demonstrating innovative water conservation techniques, and convening stakeholder groups to overcome some of the institutional barriers to integrated management of our region's water resources. These efforts should be coordinated and encouraged.

- What additional assistance is needed to improve Southern California's water security?
 - **Approve continued funding for Cal Fed.** This effort has been critically important in bringing together the parties with an interest in an equitable apportionment of the state's water supplies. Too much valuable work has gone into this effort, and the economic and environmental stakes are too high, to even consider withdrawing federal support now.
 - **Facilitate interdisciplinary planning.** The issues of supply and quality and reliability are so tightly interrelated it is impossible to act in one area without significantly affecting another area. We know, for example, that environmental regulation in one area of water quality can undermine quality initiatives in another area. It is not unusual to find different efforts for a better quality of life working at cross-purposes.
 - **Support the use of cost-benefit considerations.** Adding insult to injury, often narrowly defined efforts waste money we can ill-afford to waste. If we're going to be good public stewards we need to encourage approaches that leverage our resources much more wisely...not waste them without concern for comprehensive cost-benefit considerations.
 - **Support stakeholder processes.** We believe that the use of more integrated, comprehensive approaches to our water challenge here require an inclusive stakeholder framework. This framework will ensure that the complexities of environmental improvement are more fully understood and prioritized, that the leaders and institutions needed to solve these problems are involved enough to "own" these problems, and that efforts to raise resources will be validated by credible cost-benefit assessments and supported by greater

public consensus.

- **Make use of existing authorities.** The Clean Water Act was written with these approaches in mind. I refer you to Section 208 and its call for "areawide" approaches to improving water quality. We now refer to these stakeholder-driven efforts as watershed management planning. Call them what we may, these inclusive approaches to negotiated rule-making and problem-solving continue to be essential, especially when some parts of our community rely only on the hand of heavy regulation and confrontation. SCAG has been given Section 208 authority for our region and stands ready to implement that authority in the service of inclusive regional planning. SCAG has not kept the Section 208 planning process current largely because of a lack of funding sources.
- **Concluding points.** And as we all know in southern California, higher water quality creates more water. Higher quality in our imported water or our local water allows more reuse and more cost-effective reclamation. And as these efforts combine with ever-greater conservation, we will have sufficient water supplies to support the growth that's coming. That will be a great achievement in this desert we know as southern California.
- But achieving this water independence, drought-proofing our communities, will require a new framework for problem solving. We ask you to be ready to help support this kind of stakeholder framework, to get the resources of EPA aligned with these local watershed initiatives and to emphasize the need for integrated, consensus-driven water improvements. SCAG and the region's water agencies have the cooperative relationships necessary to respond effectively to anticipated shortfalls and to keep water supply from becoming the next "energy crisis."
- We will bring cooperative regional initiatives to your attention as they mature, both in the form of reports and future testimony. Thank you for your interest in our challenges and your willingness to be partners with us as better stewards of nature's bounty.

Table 1. SCAG Region's Projected Population, Employment, Household, and Trade

Growth, 2000-2025

	2000	2025	Percent Increase
Population (in millions)	16.8	22.6	40%
Employment (in millions)	7.4	10.0	43%
Households (in millions)	5.4	7.4	43%
Two-Way Trade (in \$billions)	\$230	\$661*	187.5%

*Figure for 2020.