

Massive San Diego Desalination Plant Takes Major Step Forward

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The San Diego County Water Authority (SCWA) has negotiated a [proposed agreement](#) with a private developer under which it will purchase at least 48,000 acre-feet of desalinated water per year for 30 years, from a Carlsbad facility.

The cost to SCWA will range from approximately \$98-\$128 million yearly, which includes amounts payable to the desalinated water supplier and improvement costs to SCWA's system to integrate the new supply. More than ninety percent (90%) of the yearly costs are amounts payable to the supplier for water.

Consumers will be impacted. According to [information](#) provided by SCWA, “[a] typical household of four people can expect to pay approximately \$5 to \$7 per month more for water by 2016 if the Water Purchase Agreement is approved and the plant produces desalinated seawater as planned.”

An AP report notes that the Carlsbad facility will produce 50 million gallons per day, estimated to be about seven percent (7%) of water needs in the San Diego region in 2020.

Seawater desalination is part of San Diego's efforts to diversify its water supply. In addition to the project referenced above, San Diego is also considering a desalination project at Camp Pendleton (currently in the planning phase) and participating in a bi-national feasibility study for a massive desalination plant in Mexico's Rosarito Beach that involves agencies in Nevada, Arizona and California which benefit from Colorado River supplies.

Currently, San Diego relies on the Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles for almost half its water supply. Critics argue that desalination efforts are too costly as compared to current suppliers.

San Diego Coastkeeper, whose mission is to protect and restore fishable, swimmable and drinkable waters in San Diego County, [argues against](#) the Carlsbad project, stating that it will use tremendous amounts of electricity to achieve its goals, produce an excess of carbon dioxide and take seawater from a sensitive lagoon, negatively impacting fisheries and the natural habitat.

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