

Statement of
Dennis Bostad, General Manager
Sweetwater Authority

Before the Water and Power Subcommittee
Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1190,
The San Diego Water Storage and Efficiency Act of 2005

November 3, 2005

Chairman Radanovich, Ranking Member Napolitano and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of H.R. 1190, the *San Diego Water Storage and Efficiency Act of 2005*.

I would also like to thank Congressman Hunter for his leadership in sponsoring H.R. 1190 to address critical drinking water storage needs in the San Diego region, as well as the other members of the local House delegation who are supporting this legislation.

My name is Dennis Bostad, and I am the General Manager of the Sweetwater Authority, which is a joint powers, publicly owned, water agency that provides drinking water to approximately 177,000 people in National City, Bonita and portions of Chula Vista, California. Sweetwater Authority in partnership with the City of San Diego strongly supports H.R. 1190, which would authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a study of the feasibility of an Intertie System in the San Diego region to improve water storage capabilities and water supply reliability. We are joined in this support by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, San Diego County Water Authority, and several other water districts.

The history of the San Diego region includes an ongoing search for safe, reliable water supplies in a semi-arid climate. Our county typically imports 90 percent of its water from northern California and the Colorado River. For many years, the region has aggressively developed a diverse supply of local water to add reliability. At Sweetwater Authority, these investments include groundwater wells, a groundwater desalination facility, two reservoirs that capture local runoff and a water treatment plant. As a result, in times of drought or water shortage, Sweetwater Authority is able to use local supply for up to 30 percent of our total service deliveries.

The Intertie System envisioned by H.R. 1190 has the potential to significantly enhance these types of local efforts by providing new drinking water storage to the San Diego region without negative impacts to the environment or private property, and at an extremely efficient cost.

Intertie System

The feasibility study authorized by H.R. 1190 would advance a project to tie together four existing water storage facilities - San Vicente, El Capitan, Loveland and Murray Reservoirs - to increase the capability to store and manage imported water, making the region more resistant to drought and water delivery service interruptions. (Please see the attached Figure.)

Currently, some reservoirs in the proposed system are significantly underutilized. Loveland Reservoir receives only local runoff from the Sweetwater River. El Capitan Reservoir currently receives local runoff and imported water, however due to pipeline limitations the full capacity of the reservoir cannot be utilized. Local rainfall in the watersheds to these reservoirs is inadequate to fill the reservoirs except on an infrequent basis, typically only twice in ten years. This “unused” capacity is a significant water storage volume that could be put to beneficial use if imported water was piped to the reservoirs.

We estimate that the increase in storage capacity from the Intertie System would be about 100,000 acre-feet. This increase in capacity would not occur by the laborious and expensive siting of new reservoirs, but by increasing the ability to annually store imported water from the Colorado River and/or the California State Project in already existing facilities. Each year, more winter water could be stored for summer use. In addition, storage could be designated for multiple year carry-over to reduce exposures to drought.

The Intertie System would not create new water supply, but rather provides the opportunity to move and store water during times of relative excess or periods when environmentally appropriate. It would not increase the amount of water imported, only the time of year that importation occurs. At the current time, for example, Sweetwater Authority has agreements with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and San Diego County Water Authority to place water in storage at Sweetwater Reservoir during the winter for use during summer months. This approach improves the efficiency and effectiveness of existing infrastructure but can only be used when reservoirs are connected to the imported water system.

Description of Reservoirs to be Enhanced

San Vicente Reservoir: the start of the Intertie System, is owned and operated by the City of San Diego and is currently capable of storing up to 90,230 acre-feet of water. An acre-foot of water will supply two average-sized families for an entire year. A current project to raise the San Vicente Dam by 100 feet would provide an additional capacity to supplement emergency storage in the region. This action supports the logic of making the reservoir a part of the Intertie System.

El Capitan Reservoir: is the destination of the First Link of the Intertie System. Built in 1934, it is located about six miles north of Loveland and has a capacity of 112,000 acre-

feet of water. This isolated facility which receives only local seasonal runoff and limited imported water has filled to capacity only 11 times in 68 years.

Loveland Reservoir: at the end of the Second Link, is located in the foothills of the Cuyamaca Mountains, 21 miles upstream of the San Diego Bay. Built in 1945, Loveland Reservoir impounds water from the Sweetwater River and is capable of storing 26,000 acre-feet. Loveland is also filled by local runoff only, and in the 57 years since it was constructed has filled to capacity only 12 times.

Murray Reservoir: the destination of Link Three, is comparatively small at 4,800-acre feet capacity, but is the site of the Alvarado Water Treatment Plant. Water from Alvarado serves a large central portion of San Diego, the City of Coronado and all of our Navy Military Bases.

Project Benefits

Although these four reservoirs are owned and operated by the City of San Diego and the Sweetwater Authority, the benefits of this project are important to the entire San Diego region. In the event of drought, or any other event that would interrupt the ability of the region to import drinking water, the additional storage provided by this project could supply the constituents of other purveyors in the region, including the Helix, Padre Dam and Otay Water Districts, as well as the San Diego County Water Authority and the Metropolitan Water District. I request permission to supply letters of support from these agencies, for inclusion as part of my testimony.

Water agencies in California, have long recognized there is a limited supply of water for an increasing population, and have encouraged the development of local sources of supply to ease impacts on the San Francisco Bay-Delta and the Colorado River. Connecting the San Vicente, El Capitan, Loveland and Murray Reservoirs would allow for an efficient use of the reservoirs, increase the region's water supply reliability, minimize environmental impacts at both the water's source and in our region, increase water storage capability, and increase the ability to efficiently provide water at the lowest possible cost.

As one example of how the project will help us better manage local water resources, I'd like to note that when the Lake Hodges Dam spilled last winter, the City of San Diego lost 98 thousand acre-feet of high quality water. Since Hodges is linked to the regional system, a significant portion of that water could have been utilized locally if the Intertie System was in place by allowing transfer of water to other reservoirs as the water level at Hodges began to rise.

The improved ability to capture and store water, whether local or imported, would also enhance the protection of the Bay-Delta. It is simply much better to store this water when it is plentiful than when water shortages cause increased pressure on the sensitive Delta environment.

The project has the potential of benefiting approximately 1.5 million residents in San Diego County, and military bases in San Diego. In addition, the Intertie System would complement California's 2005 Water Plan, which promotes the implementation of regional integrated management of California's water to promote the reliability of water supplies by maximizing the use of available storage in ways that protect the environment.

Sweetwater Authority and the City of San Diego are prepared to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct the feasibility study of the Intertie System. This study would help document the costs and the benefits of constructing the project, as well as identifying design and implementation issues that would need to be addressed. Connecting the San Vicente, El Capitan, Loveland and Murray Reservoirs would benefit the San Diego region and our military by more efficiently using the reservoirs. It would create an enhanced and integrated reservoir system with the result of increased water supply reliability. The result would be the benefits of increased water storage capability without negative impacts possibly associated with new reservoirs or new storage capacity.

I appreciate the opportunity to present this testimony and for the Subcommittee's consideration of H.R. 1190. This concludes my statement.



May 24, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for San Diego Water Storage and Efficiency Act of 2005 (H.R. 1190)

Dear Congressman Hunter:

In April 2005, the San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors adopted a position of support of your legislation, H.R. 1190, the San Diego Water Storage and Efficiency Act of 2005, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study to construct a four reservoir intertie system. We agree with you that this legislation will improve water storage opportunities, water supply reliability and water yield for the San Diego region and expand the flexibility and use of the region's local water resources.

The Water Authority appreciates your efforts on behalf of the City of San Diego, the Sweetwater Authority and the entire San Diego region to expand use of the region's local reservoirs and enhance critical water supply projects and reliability programs. We also appreciate your willingness to sponsor legislation that will further efforts to provide a safe and reliable water supply for the San Diego region.

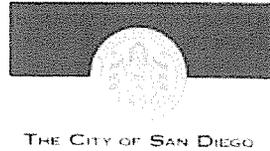
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Bond", is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

James Bond, Chair
San Diego County Water Authority

JB:lg

cc: Dennis Bostad, Sweetwater Authority
Frank Belock, City of San Diego



June 20, 2005

The Honorable George Radanovich
Chairman
House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power
1522 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Radanovich:

On behalf of the Sweetwater Authority, the City of San Diego, the San Diego County Water Authority, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, we urge you to support H.R. 1190 (Hunter), a measure authorizing the Secretary of Interior to conduct a feasibility study to design and construct a four-reservoir inter-tie system to improve water supply reliability and water yield of an existing water storage system for the benefit of the entire Southern California region, including the water users of San Diego County.

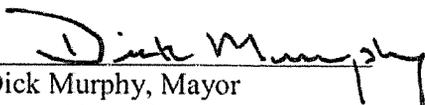
Specifically, we join in the San Diego congressional delegation's attached request that you consider H.R. 1190 as a subject for one of your upcoming Subcommittee hearings (see attached).

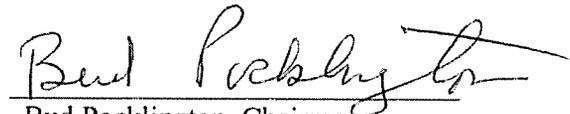
Millions of water users in San Diego County, one of the fastest growing regions in the state, are depending on federal, state and local policy makers to make certain that there is an adequate water supply to provide for our future. We believe that there is excellent potential to significantly improve water resource management in San Diego County by connecting the four existing reservoirs in the region. Establishing a direct inter-connection may avoid the significantly greater costs of constructing additional surface water storage and infrastructure needed to connect it to existing distribution systems. This legislation will provide for an accurate determination of whether the intertie is a feasible approach to enhancing water distribution, storage and yield in a manner that is both cost-effective and environmentally sensitive.

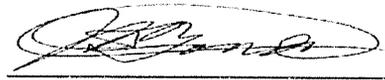
Honorable George Radanovich
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We greatly appreciate your dedication and leadership as Chairman of the House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power and your work in helping to stabilize and enhance California's water-dependent economy. Thank you for your favorable consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


Dick Murphy, Mayor
City of San Diego


Bud Pocklington, Chairman
Sweetwater Authority


James Bond, Chairman
San Diego County Water Authority


Wes Bannister, Chairman
Metropolitan Water District of
Southern California

cc: The Honorable Duncan Hunter, and all Members of the CA Congressional Delegation