

WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE ALERT: AB 954

OVERVIEW: Introduced by Assembly Member Charles Calderon (Montebello), Assembly Bill 954 would radically change existing rate setting authority, requiring replenishment assessments for each basin within a water replenishment district and placing specific limitations on future rates.

Similar to AB 640 and SB 1412 (introduced and failed in 2007 and 2010, respectively), AB 954 would **mandate** a “split assessment” for groundwater recharge in both the West Coast and Central Basins, which is managed by the Water Replenishment District (WRD) of Southern California. WRD has previously maintained one balanced uniform rate to promote sound regional water supply planning and encourage full development of local water supplies to reduce dependence on imported water.

West Basin MWD OPPOSES AB 954

In simple terms, AB 954 is fundamentally flawed, ignores years of progress and near full agreement to amend the current adjudication, and places self-serving economic considerations above balanced regional water supply planning and cooperative decision-making. As a result, AB 954 will have a dramatic negative effect on critical Southern California efforts to reduce dependence on imported water supplies.

West Basin favors responsible water stewardship and opposes AB 954. AB 954 runs counter to crucial Southern California and statewide water policy objectives and will:

Financially harm many economically disadvantaged communities. The increased cost to pump groundwater for communities in the West Coast Basin would drastically increase water rates for residents in the Los Angeles region, including the Cities of Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale, Compton and unincorporated Los Angeles County areas.

Negatively impact the already delicate San Joaquin Bay-Delta ecosystem. By increasing the replenishment rates in the West Coast Basin, water retailers would potentially seek alternative imported supplies, increasing the region’s dependence on imported water supplies from Northern California.

Blatantly ignore critical hydrologic underflow from the Central Groundwater Basin to the West Coast Groundwater Basin. Passage of any legislation utilizing the flawed replenishment assessment calculation identified in AB 954 will result in further costly litigation; as pumpers in the West Coast Groundwater Basin would file a lawsuit to adjudicate the underflow.

Usurp local rate setting authority and balanced water supply management programs. AB 954 proscribes the replenishment assessment calculation and arbitrarily limits future rate management. This authority is currently used by local agencies to properly manage supplies and programs designed to drought-proof the region.

Cripple regional cooperation and Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Programs. AB 954 will discourage local groundwater conjunctive use and water banking opportunities and would strand tens of millions of dollars worth of groundwater water supply and seawater barrier infrastructure.