



The San Diego County Water Authority Regional Conveyance System (RCS) – Environmentally Destructive Boondoggle

The San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) has spent over a \$1.3M of ratepayer funds to explore building a massive conveyance system to transport water from the Colorado River to San Diego that would result in environmental destruction and massive water rate increases for three generations. The proposed project is known as the Regional Conveyance System (RCS).

In August 2020 the SDCWA board will be voting on whether to advance (Phase B) of the RCS project at cost of an additional \$1.3 Million. This is the fifth look at the feasibility of building an aqueduct.

Eighteen of the 24 member agencies at the SDCWA commissioned an independent report to analyze the findings of the RCS Study (Phase A). The **independent report concluded that the project is not cost-competitive and its findings are based on unreasonable, “highly implausible” assumptions**. The Water Authority’s own long-term demand forecasts do not support the need for a project of this scope and size.



Project Facts:

- The project cost is estimated at **approximately \$6 Billion and it is redundant** with an already-existing Colorado River conveyance system.
- The project consists of between 85 and 132 miles of conveyance, 47 miles of canals, 39 miles of pipelines, and **47 miles of tunnels through the Cuyamaca mountains, crossed by at least six active fault lines**, subject to damage due to seismic activity.
- Water conveyed through the RCS would need to be desalinated *and* pumped over mountains, adding exorbitant energy demands and costs, **including a 40% increase in energy demands** compared to the current conveyance. The accompanying **increase in greenhouse gases** would be significant.

- The SDCWA's preferred route would **cross through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Cleveland National Forest, the Borrego Springs Community, and potentially impact groundwater resources near San Pasqual Indian Reservation.**
- The project relies on importing supplies from Imperial County.

Independent Report Findings:

- “**The project is not cost-effective** when evaluated using reasonable assumptions of MWD price escalation. When the economic model inputs...are modified accordingly, the project loses any cost advantage and **becomes significantly more costly than the other options.**”
- “The Draft Study’s assessment of project economic risks omits the possibility, or probability, that long-term **Water Authority sales will decline**... putting at risk the ability to utilize a RCS facility at full capacity and thereby **further diminishing the project’s cost-feasibility.**”
- “Rather than investing further in the evaluation of an RCS project...**budgets and staffing schedules set aside for RCS investigations could be applied more productively.**”

Other Considerations:

- Dollars spent for this project **could otherwise be allocated** to more equitable, locally-controlled climate-smart water alternatives such as potable **water recycling, stormwater capture, green infrastructure, climate adaptive strategies, conservation** incentives, and water efficiency technology.
- The SDCWA already has **among the highest rates in the State**. The costs of this proposed project will burden three generations of San Diegans and make water **unaffordable for low-income families.**
- The negative environmental **impacts of tunneling and drilling through the San Diego mountain ranges** are massive, likely rendering the project un-permittable.
- Colorado River water supplies are already at risk due to climate change.