

MASTER RESPONSE NO. 5 - GROWTH INDUCEMENT

A number of commentors expressed concern about the potential for the Cadiz Project to contribute to growth within the service area of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan). Some suggested that growth control measures should be imposed in lieu of the project.

The concerns about growth inducement are addressed in the Final EIR/EIS. The evidence supports the conclusion that the Cadiz Project will neither induce growth nor eliminate a constraint on growth. Furthermore, Metropolitan has no authority to regulate or control population or land use. Therefore, it cannot impose growth control measures within its service area.

Section 6 of the Final EIR/EIS discusses historic and projected growth within Metropolitan's service area, which includes much of the urbanized coastal plain of southern California (Final EIR/EIS, Volume I, Figure 2-1). There has been a 22% rise in population from 1980 to 1990. The factors that contribute to the rise in population include socioeconomic factors (employment and industry, housing availability, cost of living) as well as intangible factors (weather or aesthetics). Regional planning agencies like the Southern California Association of Governments project that population growth will continue in southern California through 2020. The growth projections are derived from local officials and are based on regional planning goals. (Final EIR/EIS, Volume I, Section 2.4.2.)

Past experience with drought conditions indicates that restrictions in water use have not restrained growth. During droughts in 1976-77 and 1987-92, when water conservation measures were imposed, population growth continued. For example, the growth rate over the period 1987 to 1992 was 2.5% per year. It is clear that short-term water shortages and mandatory conservation measures did not affect the rate of population growth. The Cadiz Project will help offset the impacts of growth on water supplies. As such, the Cadiz Project responds to needs generated by growth, but does not itself induce growth or eliminate a constraint that has been shown to limit growth.

There are additional reasons why the Cadiz Project will not have growth inducing effects within Metropolitan's service area. The project is located on the Colorado River Aqueduct, and will deliver stored Colorado River water and indigenous groundwater through the Aqueduct for use in the service area. The Cadiz Project will not change the capacity of the Aqueduct, but rather will provide a source of replacement water for other sources of Colorado River water that may not be available in the future.

The Colorado River Aqueduct has a capacity of 1.25 million acre feet (maf) per year. Metropolitan has historically delivered this much Colorado River water, although its dependable supplies of Colorado River water are only 656,000 acre feet per year. (Final EIR/EIS, Volume I, Section 2.5.3) Annual water deliveries through the Aqueduct have generally ranged between 1.2 and 1.3 maf since the mid-1980's. Periodic reductions in Colorado River Aqueduct deliveries prior to 1984 were due to factors such as the availability of lower cost water from other sources or blending requirements within Metropolitan's service area.

In the past, Metropolitan has made full use of the Aqueduct by delivering water that is apportioned to, but unused by, the states of Arizona and Nevada, as well as surplus water to which California is entitled. As Arizona and Nevada reach the full use of their entitlements on the Colorado River, there will be less water available for use by California agencies, including Metropolitan. During years in which there is insufficient Colorado River water to deliver a full 1.25 million acre feet to Metropolitan, there will be space available in the Colorado River Aqueduct. The Cadiz Project will provide a replacement supply of water that may be delivered to Metropolitan's service area using the available space in the Aqueduct.

Since the size of the Colorado River Aqueduct is not increased by the Cadiz Project, it will not result in the delivery of a greater volume of water than Metropolitan has delivered in the past. Instead, the project provides an alternate source of water for delivery through the Aqueduct. Since there is no increase in the capacity of the delivery system, the project cannot result in the delivery of additional water supplies. Therefore, the project cannot have growth inducing impacts.

The Cadiz Project will add flexibility to Colorado River Aqueduct operations. When surplus Colorado River water is available or when demands for such water in Metropolitan's service area are reduced, a portion of the Colorado River Aqueduct capacity will be used to put water in storage in the Cadiz groundwater basin. Conversely, when no surplus is available from the Colorado River and demands for imported water within Metropolitan's service area require full deliveries from the Colorado River Aqueduct, available Aqueduct capacity will be used to deliver stored water and available indigenous groundwater from the Cadiz groundwater basin. This balancing of Aqueduct operations to maintain constant Colorado River area water supplies does not alter historical Colorado River Aqueduct delivery patterns and does not cause growth.