



August 26, 2021

Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Drought Budget Package

Dear Governor Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Atkins, and Speaker Rendon:

The undersigned organizations are committed to a resilient water future, vibrant communities, and healthy environment. We are writing to urge you to invest in cost-effective and climate-friendly water supply strategies including conservation, water recycling, and stormwater capture in the final California Drought Budget Package, and to avoid unnecessary investments in strategies like the Poseidon Huntington Beach seawater desalination project that will result in major greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and significant environmental damage.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released its “code red” [report](#) on the state of the climate crisis, calling the human influence on global warming “unequivocal.” The scientific report directly links increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to more extreme and intense heatwaves, floods, and droughts.

The IPCC report calls for smart investments in infrastructure that help prepare our communities for the impacts of climate change and warns against investments that will inadvertently make climate change worse. The **report cites seawater desalination as a prime example of “maladaptation”** — an action intended to mitigate climate change, but that actually worsens the problem.

As California is gripped by yet another drought and wildfires rage across the West, it becomes even more critical that our infrastructure investments support projects that are part of the climate solution, not part of the problem. The Poseidon Huntington Beach desalination plant is the type of “maladaptation” project the IPCC warns us against. **Ocean desalting uses several times more energy than tertiary-treated recycled water and is significantly more costly.** It requires emission of massive amounts of carbon and destroys ecosystems. The [Municipal Water District of Orange County](#) reviewed several water supply alternatives for Orange County and concluded that Poseidon was the “the worst ranked project,” presented the greatest financial risk, and was the least cost-effective alternative. Independent analyses by the [Pacific Institute](#) and [others](#) agree that the economic and environmental costs of ocean desalination do not justify the supply benefit.

The current drought is serious, and future droughts will only get worse. But we have common sense solutions and back-up water supply strategies that will not exacerbate the climate crisis and its related heat, drought, fire, and flooding. **We should invest in water conservation, recycling, and stormwater capture as back-up supply options**—all of which are proven to be successful job creators and much friendlier to a changing climate. Major water recycling projects are being planned in various parts of California including the City of San Diego’s Pure Water recycling project, the City of Los Angeles’ Hyperion water recycling project, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California’s Carson water recycling project. **These projects will create thousands of jobs** while expanding our water supplies with a small carbon footprint.

We must act quickly and effectively to ensure a better quality of life for future generations—one that is not defined by water scarcity, scorching summers, and smoke-filled skies. We urge you **to invest in infrastructure and jobs that build a cleaner, brighter, more resilient future.** Projects like the Poseidon desalination plant are unnecessary, financially irresponsible, environmentally destructive, and reckless in the face of intensifying climate change impacts. We urge you to **pull the plug on Poseidon** and invest in water conservation, water recycling, and stormwater capture.

Sincerely,

Andrea León-Grossmann
Director of Climate Action
Azul

Sean Bothwell
Executive Director
California Coastkeeper Alliance

Susan Jordan
Executive Director
California Coastal Protection Network

Garry Brown
Founding Director
Coachella Valley Waterkeeper
Inland Empire Waterkeeper
Orange County Coastkeeper

Conner Everts
Co-Chair, Desal Response Group
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