



## **Policy Positions**

Updated: February 12, 2025

### **Mesa Water District (Mesa Water®) supports:**

1. Groundwater Quality Protection
  - a. Support the Orange County Water District (OCWD) groundwater quality protection programs
    - i. Basin Equity Assessment (BEA) Exemption Program for Impaired Groundwater (including the Mesa Water Reliability Facility)
    - ii. The MTBE, North Basin, and South Basin groundwater protection projects
    - iii. The Tustin and Irvine desalters
  - b. Encourage OCWD to protect the Orange County Groundwater Water Basin (Basin) from chlorides caused by seawater intrusion
    - i. Encourage OCWD to set a goal of maintaining protective elevations along the coast
    - ii. Encourage OCWD to hold semi-annual barrier meetings with Coastal Agencies (Huntington Beach, Mesa Water, and Seal Beach)
    - iii. Encourage semi-annual reporting on the barrier
  - c. Collaborate with OCWD in advocating for funding and treatment of Constituents of Emerging Concern (CECs) such as PFAS
2. Policies that raise and stabilize the Basin Pumping Percentage (BPP)
  - a. Support OCWD setting a target BPP that they intend to consistently meet
  - b. Support new water supply projects that help the Basin achieve this goal
  - c. Support OCWD adopting a water supply policy that sets a goal of developing water supply and recharge capabilities for the Basin, including purchasing replenishment water and other actions that result in a reliable and predictable source of groundwater at a BPP of not less than 80 percent. A goal of this policy is to accomplish this with a cost-neutral, or better, impact on OCWD's Groundwater Producers when the avoided cost of purchasing imported water is considered
3. Policies that keep the Basin full
  - a. Support OCWD adhering to the BPP-setting formula
  - b. Support maximum production at the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) to ensure a cost-effective, high-quality, environmentally friendly, and sustainable local water supply that benefits all OCWD Groundwater Producers and that increases the region's current and future water reliability
  - c. Support maximum wastewater flows treatable by the GWRS to the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD) -- and support OCSD/OCWD's permanent acquisition of such wastewater flows -- to ensure source reliability for the GWRS
  - d. Support stormwater capture projects that are cost-effective (e.g., equivalent to or less than GWRS costs) and that contribute source water to the Basin Principal Aquifer

4. Basin Storage/Banking and Exchange/Transfer Programs that are market-based with the primary benefits accruing to OCWD, its Groundwater Producers, and the ratepayers they serve, with such Programs applying the “Beneficiaries Pay” principle and addressing issues including, but not limited to:
  - a. Full cost recovery, at a minimum, of a proportional share of the historic and future capital investments as well as operations and maintenance costs incurred by OCWD to manage the Basin
  - b. Full cost recovery, at a minimum, of the proportional value that entry into the Basin affords, including the value of reliability (and thus loss of reliability to OCWD’s Groundwater Producers through the loss of available storage capacity) and the value of treatment
  - c. Accounting for water loss in a current or future year (both lost out of the Basin and lost due to inability to spread or extract)
  - d. Consideration that the above is merely a “break even” deal, and any program should bring significant benefits in excess of the above to OCWD and its Groundwater Producers
  - e. Deferring entering into any agreements if an OCWD Groundwater Producer has an active lawsuit against OCWD
  - f. Deferring entering into any agreements until the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Conjunctive Use Program has been terminated
  - g. Limiting any potential future storage/banking agreements to programs that are compliant with OCWD Act Section 2.1.c
  - h. Maximizing the beneficial use of the Basin while maximizing the BPP for OCWD’s Groundwater Producers
5. Annexations into OCWD that are financially neutral
6. Policies that ensure a financially strong OCWD, including practices that maintain OCWD’s current AAA credit rating from two of the three credit rating agencies
7. The potential merger of the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and OCWD if the merger:
  - a. is mutually agreed upon by both MWDOC and OCWD, with any governance change supported by MWDOC’s and OCWD’s Boards of Directors
  - b. encourages MWDOC and OCWD exploring mutual areas of efficiency that results in economic savings for the members of both agencies
  - c. improves or, at a minimum, preserves the quality, reliability, and sustainability of wholesale water services to the members of both agencies
  - d. preserves the interests of OCWD’s existing Groundwater Producers and protects those interests from diminished groundwater resources or supplies
  - e. supports MWDOC’s current geographic boundaries, and preserves the existing boundaries of the Basin for pumping and storage purposes
  - f. supports MWDOC’s current mission, and allows the Basin to remain unadjudicated

- g. respects the “one person one vote” principle if the new Board of Directors is a wholly elected board
  - h. is facilitated openly and transparently
  - i. increases the effectiveness of Orange County’s representation at MWD, with a coordinated and unified voice representing Orange County
- 8. Increased influence at Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)
  - a. Support increased allocations of MWDOC resources for engagement at MWD
  - b. Support coordination of the entire Orange County MWD delegation
- 9. MWDOC’s priority initiatives at MWD
  - a. Protect Mesa Water’s service area from any cost shifts as a result of any lawsuits impacting MWD
  - b. Encourage continued efforts for improving the Delta
  - c. Seek opportunities for MWD to provide assistance, funding, and/or partnership with MWDOC on developing and supporting seawater and brackish groundwater desalination in Orange County, including support for Mesa Water’s Local groundwater Supply Improvement Project (Local SIP)
  - d. Support MWD’s incentive programs to encourage and help fund local/regional development of new water supplies, as well as water use efficiency and related outreach and education programs, such as the Mesa Water Education Center, which benefit the communities and customers served by MWD member agencies and sub-member agencies
- 10. Close working relationships with MWDOC on local and regional issues and programs for which the organization is advocating at MWD
- 11. The current Mesa Water Strategic Plan, including the District’s goals to:
  - a. Provide an abundant, local, reliable and safe water supply
  - b. Perpetually renew and improve our infrastructure
  - c. Be financially responsible and transparent
  - d. Increase favorable opinion of Mesa Water
  - e. Attract, develop and retain skilled employees
  - f. Provide excellent customer service
  - g. Actively participate in regional and statewide water issues
- 12. Government Transparency and Accountability
  - a. Support policies that balance the benefits and costs of new mandates regarding accessibility to public meetings and public agency websites, including compliance with the American Disabilities Act as well as with any future mandates related to website (and email) domain extensions
  - b. Support policies that provide access to public information, including California Public Records Act (CPRA) requirements that:

- i. Are clearly defined and feasible to implement without adding overly burdensome and costly processes (preserving the “balancing test”)
  - ii. Do not place new limits on the filing of reverse-CPRAs lawsuits
  - iii. Exclude documents maintained by private contractors and vendors relating to their work for public agencies
  - iv. Preserve the “attorney-client,” “deliberative process,” “executive,” and “official information” privileges, as well as the “attorney work product doctrine” for records
  - v. Allow the public agency to recover full costs of CPRAs requests
13. The Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission (OC LAFCO) as more of a facilitator than an initiator of actions
14. The development of cost-effective and environmentally sensitive sources of water, including storage, potable reuse, recycling, groundwater clean-up, stormwater capture, conjunctive use, conservation, conveyance, and desalination
15. CalDesal’s mission and its efforts to advocate for funding for brackish and seawater desalination, including engagement with the state of California’s Ocean Plan Amendment process to enable more favorable permitting conditions for water desalination projects
16. The co-equal goals of improved water supply reliability and Delta ecosystem health
17. Policies that protect local revenue sources and uses for special districts -- including through ratemaking authority, property tax, and the ability to fund and maintain appropriate reserves -- as well as policies that ensure special districts have equitable access, as compared to other service providers, to government funding to support building and maintaining water infrastructure
18. Water rates, fees, and other service or use charges based on true costs in conformance with Proposition 218, and tax-free revenue
19. The “Expenditures Per Capita” metric as being more accessible and equitable, as well as being a simpler and superior method -- versus comparing water rates alone -- for measuring the full, true cost and “affordability” of a public water system’s services to its community
20. Policies that encourage economical and practical water efficiency for indoor water use, irrigation water use, and commercial and industrial water use, without stranding investments in potable reuse systems, including:
  - a. Indoor water use efficiency at the level needed for community health and safety -- as substantiated by fact-based analyses that are credible, replicable, and verifiable -- and that protects local investments in potable reuse systems
  - b. Irrigation water use efficiency at the level necessary for productive crops, attractive landscapes, tree health, fire protection, heat island prevention, recreation, and property value preservation
  - c. Commercial and industrial water use efficiency at a level that sustains economic vitality

21. Policies that recognize existing local water source development, and that incentivize potential future investments in local water source development, for bonus incentives/credits/variances within conservation mandates
22. Policies and practices that safeguard and secure critical public utility infrastructure and operations from threats including, but not necessarily limited to, the following: cyberthreats, data breaches, electric power interruptions/outages (PSPS), fleet electrification mandates that could delay or disable public utilities' services, fossil fuel generator restrictions that disallow emergency use and maintenance/testing for such, natural disasters, ransomware attacks, supply chain attacks, terrorism, theft of water, and theft of municipal metal infrastructure, such as fire hydrants, manhole covers, and backflow devices
23. The equitable treatment of OCWD -- and its programs and projects -- by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) with respect to grants funding and related considerations as part of SAWPA's Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning and One Water One Watershed (OWOW) program
24. Local, regional, state, and federal efforts to: invest in California's aging water infrastructure, develop new water supply and water storage projects for California and expedite/streamline permitting for such, expand Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO), and address wildfire risk (which threatens California's headwaters) via pre-fire mitigation efforts on government lands, nonprofit lands, and around utility corridors, especially in areas at higher risk of wildfire (such as the Wildland Urban Interface).

**Mesa Water opposes:**

1. The encroachment of Mesa Water easements, rights-of-way, and property without negotiation, agreed upon compensation, and advance approval at the sole discretion of the District
2. Administrative, legislative, and regulatory actions that mandate new, unfunded operational practices which add cost burdens or time delays to work conducted by essential public utilities
3. Policies that would limit essential services and infrastructure funding tools -- such as capacity fees, connection fees, and development impact fees -- which allow special districts to effectively plan and fund the long-term infrastructure needed to serve current and future residents
4. One-size-fits-all mandates regarding water use efficiency that ignore local IRWM plans or Urban Water Management Plans
5. One-size-fits-all mandates regarding Low Income Rates Assistance (LIRA) programs that duplicate or hinder local LIRA plans that effectively and efficiently provide water affordability assistance for residential ratepayers