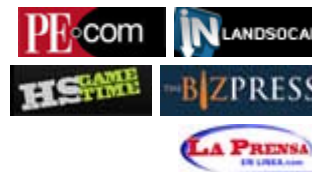


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## Official: Water recycling critical

DROUGHT: Inland agency executive testifies before lawmakers about where to channel stimulus funds.



10:00 PM PDT on Tuesday, April 28, 2009

By **BEN GOAD**  
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - With California facing a third consecutive year of drought, federal economic recovery dollars should go to water recycling programs that will both create jobs and stretch the state's ever-dwindling supply, a top Inland water official told lawmakers Tuesday.

Federal officials recently announced that roughly \$135 million from President Barack Obama's \$787 billion stimulus legislation would go toward the construction of water recycling projects across the country.

"This decision means that drought-starved communities and regions where the recession has been particularly devastating to local economies are now in a position to address two problems at once," Inland Empire Utilities Agency chief executive Richard Atwater said in prepared testimony submitted to the House Natural Resources' subcommittee on Water and Power.

Atwater said the Chino-based agency has decreased its reliance on potable water by 20 percent in the last five years through water recycling and desalting programs.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Feb. 27 declared a statewide emergency due to drought and raised the prospect of water rationing.

"If oil becomes too expensive, we can shift our energy demands to other sources," Atwater said. "But if reliable water supplies dry up, our industries, ranging from agriculture to manufacturing to retail, cannot sustain their business operations."

Local officials have requested \$14 million of the funds for the Inland Empire Regional Recycled Water Program, with the work focused in three areas: Fontana/Upland, Rancho Cucamonga and Montclair, said

Martha Davis, the agency's executive manager of policy development.

Beyond water recycling projects, water officials and lawmakers should be exploring ways to increase the region's water supply, said Inland Rep. Joe Baca, a member of the panel.

Baca suggested the possibility of importing water from other states, including South Dakota.

"They've got plenty of water," said Baca, D-Rialto. "This way, we would not always be competing with Northern California."

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