



[Click Here To Check Current Inland Empire Traffic Conditions \(http://kvcrnews.org/traffic\)](http://kvcrnews.org/traffic)

[The Inland \(/programs/inland/\)](/programs/inland/)

# As More People Move To The Inland Empire, How Is There Going To Be Enough Water?

By SHAREEN AWAD • NOV 6, 2018

[Tweet \(http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?\)](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?)

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy8mdu3ql&text=As%20More%20People%20Move%20To%20The%20Inland%20Empire%](http://www.tinyurl.com/%2Fy8mdu3ql&text=As%20More%20People%20Move%20To%20The%20Inland%20Empire%20)



[http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kvcr/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201811/406.jpg](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kvcr/files/styles/x_large/public/201811/406.jpg)

CREDIT TRISHA AHMED



Listen

4:59

*Every month, the Empire Network's community-reporting project, The Inland, answers your questions about the Inland Empire that have been submitted and voted on by the public. Our prompt: What do you wonder about the Inland Empire, its people and culture?*

**You Asked:**

With all of the new housing going up and considering we're in a drought area, how is local government going to provide enough water? – Joyce Paul, Rancho Cucamonga

## **We Answered:**

Water scarcity is an issue people in Southern California think about a lot. California experienced one of the worst droughts in state history from 2011 to 2017. Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in 2014, calling for statewide water conservation. By 2022, California residents will need to limit their indoor water use to 55 gallons of water per person a day. And by 2030, that number will drop to 50 gallons.

Joyce Paul, a retired educator from Rancho Cucamonga, said she's concerned about the kinds of water restrictions she's seeing in her community.

"We were under severe water conservation. You could only water on given days. Many people lost their yards," she said.

With many new homes being built in her area, she's worried that she'll have to use even less water, and wants to know what kinds of water conservation solutions are being developed around the Inland Empire.

## **Recycled Wastewater as a New Source of Water**

In October, KVCR took a tour of the Solids Handling Facility at the Inland Empire Utilities Agency's (IEUA) Regional Water Recycling Plant in Chino. Basically, we got the inside scoop on how our sewage gets treated to be high quality recycled water.

Randy Lee, our tour guide and the Executive Manager of Operations at the IEUA, took us through the preliminary treatment building, where two giant machines that looked like rakes were being used to separate solids from the wastewater. "It smells like a bathroom," he said.

The infrastructure for distribution of recycled wastewater has come a long way.

"Two or three decades ago, we didn't have the pipelines, we didn't have the pump station for us to distribute all of the recycled water," Lee said. "Now you'll see freeway medians irrigated by recycled water. You'll see industrial cooling that is using recycled water. So, there's a lot of different purposes."

Lee said that recycling locally also reduces the cost of water. To import water costs about \$200 more per acre-foot than it does to use IEUA recycled water. An acre-foot meets the annual indoor and outdoor water needs of one to two average households.

Lee stressed, "Every gallon of recycled water you use, it's another gallon of potable water that you're saving."

Recycled wastewater can be used as potable water, or water suitable for drinking, in some areas. A lot of people have coined the phrase, "Toilet to Tap," though Lee cringes whenever he hears that.

“I think it’s really misconstrued the process of water treatment. If you really think about water, water is constantly recycling through our environment,” he said. “There’s a lot of process we use to treat that water to a very, very high level and other agencies have advanced treatment that’s even further processed. So you get to a point where it’s really potable water. It’s equivalent to that level of cleanliness.”

Orange County is already recycling 100 million gallons of wastewater a day and then treating it for drinking water. It’s the world’s largest purification system for potable reuse. Lee said, in a couple of decades, this process of turning wastewater into drinking water is expected to be the norm.

## **California Waterfix**

When considering long-term solutions, Joyce Paul brought up the question: “If they can build pipelines for oil, why can't they build pipelines for water?”

She’s not too far off from some of the current infrastructure. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta supplies fresh water to two-thirds of the state’s population and millions of acres of farmland. It is considered California’s most crucial water and ecological resource, moving water from Northern to Southern California through a maze of levees. However, this delivery system is said to be outdated and threatened in the long-run by floods, rising sea levels, and earthquakes.

The nearly \$17 billion CA-WaterFix/Eco-Restore project is a potential solution to the aging infrastructure. The plan would construct two 40-foot wide tunnels to divert the flow of water underneath the Delta instead of through it, while also restoring 30,000 acres of habitat.

“I think it’s a very needed project,” Lee said. “CalFix will divert that water down through Southern California. That would provide us with a reliable source of freshwater for 25 million citizens in California.”

But the massive water project is controversial. Some people are concerned that CA WaterFix is an engineering overload, like Boykin Witherspoon, Executive Director of the Water Resources & Policy Initiatives from the California State University Office of the Chancellor.

“With the twin tunnels, as big as it is, it’s just a fix for something bigger. We built pumps to move water to Southern California, but we put them in the wrong place, so now it’s sucking saltwater into the Delta.”

## **The Potential Financial Toll**

Many people are concerned about the kind of financial impact these major water projects would have on taxpayers overall.

According to The San Diego Union-Tribune, Cal WaterFix is estimated to cost California residents around \$5 more per person.

Professor Schwabe, Professor of Environmental Economics and Policy at the University of California Riverside, said he's not concerned that people are going to see their water costs spiking anytime soon.

"Looking at water agencies and their efforts, I can honestly say they're really trying to make sure that their programs don't impact customers to any significant degree in terms of their water bills," he said. "There are some things that just need to be paid for and I think they're trying to do their best to provide reliable, safe drinking water to the customers and to the agricultural community."

Schwabe added that people have been taking major steps towards conserving their water since the drought started.

"Since 1995, per capita water use statewide was around 232 gallons per person per day. During the drought, per capita use dropped to 130 gallons per person per day," he said.

Lee also said he's not worried. Because California residents know there will be more droughts, he said people are using way less water than they used to.

"There's a lot of [housing] development happening, but we actually don't see that dramatic switch coming into our treatment plan," he said. "That, to us, is a sign of much higher efficiency in water use. We're making huge strides to be more independent from the imported water side."

## **Reducing Water Demand in the IE**

Schwabe said that in the Inland Empire, there are efforts in place to reduce water demand and to make it easier for households to use less water, especially when it comes to outdoor landscaping.

"It's somewhere above 50 percent to 70 percent, but the majority of water going to households is being used for outdoor landscaping," Schwabe said.

So Cal Water Smart (<http://www.socalwatersmart.com/>) offers rebate programs for high-efficiency sprinkler nozzles that produce less water runoff, drip irrigation systems, and weather-based irrigation controllers. A rebate program returns a portion of the purchase price of a product. In this case, it's a way to encourage residents to purchase water-saving systems and appliances. You can contact your local water agency for more information on rebates.

"Agencies are pushing for a change in how we're thinking about the landscape in our yards," Schwabe said. "Make it into more drought-friendly or California-friendly landscaping, which uses less water. We've been taught this ever since we were kids — not letting the water run when you're brushing your teeth. But the real gains right now are associated with reducing outdoor water use."

## **Getting Involved**

Witherspoon said he encourages Inland Empire residents to go out and vote in the midterm elections.

“Learn more about what your elected waterboard does and then vote locally for the people who reflect your values on how and when and why we should use water,” he said.

On the California ballot, residents will be voting on Proposition 3. If approved, it would authorize \$8.9 billion in state debt to be used towards improving water infrastructure, wildlife habitats, water safety, and other related issues.

Polls are open today.

To find out your polling location, you can visit: <https://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information/find-your-polling-place/>

For an in-depth view of all things water-related in the state of California, including updated information on WaterFix/Eco-Restore, visit <https://water.ca.gov/> ([https://water.ca.gov](https://water.ca.gov/))

To learn more about the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, our water sources, rebates, water saving tips, and much more, visit <https://www.ieua.org/> (<https://www.ieua.org/>)

For a voter guide and more information on Proposition 3, you can visit <http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/> (<http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/>)

***If you have a question about the Inland Empire, ask The Inland! (<http://empirenetwork.org/theinland>) You ask, we put your questions up for a vote, the public decides which topic we should investigate, and then we go out and report back with answers.***

 [Tweet \(<http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?>](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?)

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy8mdu3q1&text=As%20More%20People%20Move%20To%20The%20Inland%20Empire%](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy8mdu3q1&text=As%20More%20People%20Move%20To%20The%20Inland%20Empire%20)

Recommend

Tweet

Share

Sort by Best



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your site

Disqus' Privacy Policy

KVCR is a service of the San Bernardino Community College District.



(http://sbccd.org)



(http://fnx.org)

SBCCD (http://sbccd.org)

FCC Public Files (https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/0BxWi-30z4IVRVkJLUEh4OEJXTDQ)

KVCR TV (http://www.kvcr.org)

Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/EmpirePBS/)

Twitter (https://twitter.com/kvcrempirenews)

Sign Up for Updates (http://kvcrnews.org/mailling-list)