



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA  
Chief Executive Officer

July 2, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka  
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "W. T. Fujioka", is written over the printed name and title.

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

## **DRINKING WATER QUALITY STUDY (AGENDA OF DECEMBER 22, 2009, ITEM 30A)**

On December 22, 2009, in a motion resulting from a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) on the quality of drinking water nationwide, and in which the City of Los Angeles was included, your Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) along with the Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures Department (ACWM), Environmental Toxicology Laboratory; the Department of Public Health (DPH); and the Department of Public Works (DPW), Water Works Division to re-test the water quality and to confer with State health officials, Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power (LADWP), and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) in reviewing the report of the EWG, and report back to the Board with recommendations within 90 days.

On March 29, 2010, my office submitted a status report on this motion requesting an additional 90 days in which to report back to your Board with recommendations.

### **BACKGROUND**

EWG's National Tap Water Quality Database study is comprised of water quality tests conducted by 47,667 utilities nationwide between 2004 and 2009. The collected data was obtained primarily from State and environmental departments that collect records from drinking water utilities. In reviewing the data, EWG assessed the levels of contaminants found in tap water against a host of legal limits and health guidelines

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including, but not limited to: Maximum Contaminant Level, One-in-10,000 cancer risk limit, and the Drinking Water Equivalent Level. Based on this assessment, EWG rated water utilities which serve populations of greater than 250,000 people using the following three criteria: 1) total number of chemicals since 2004, 2) percentage of chemicals found for which tests were conducted, and 3) the highest average level for an individual pollutant relative to either legal limits for regulated chemicals or national average concentrations for unregulated chemicals. Of the 100 water utilities nationwide included in the study, MWD and the LADWP, which serve a majority of residents and businesses in Los Angeles County, were ranked 58<sup>th</sup> and 83<sup>rd</sup>, respectively.

## **SAMPLING LOCATIONS**

In order to satisfy the requirements of this motion, the participating County departments first needed to obtain the permission of the LADWP and the MWD to collect water samples from their respective treatment plants, pump stations, and distribution systems. Permission from the aforementioned agencies was granted in January 2010. A total of eight sample sites, comprised of four sites operated by the LADWP and four operated by the MWD, were selected to obtain representative water samples. The water at these sites is a mix of local groundwater and surface water originating from the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Colorado River Aqueduct, and the California Aqueduct. Details of the sample sites are as follows:

### LADWP Sample Sites

- Los Angeles Aqueduct Filtration Plant Effluent - Represents a blend of treated surface water originating from the Los Angeles Aqueduct and the west branch of the California Aqueduct. This sample site is an entry point into the distribution system which supplies the San Fernando Valley, Western Los Angeles, and the Central Los Angeles areas.
- North Hollywood Pump Station - Represents a blend of treated groundwater originating from local well fields in the San Fernando Valley and surface water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct Filtration Plant. The blended water is distributed to the Toyon Tanks and the River Supply Conduit trunk line to serve the Central Los Angeles and Hollywood areas.
- Eilat - Represents a distribution system location with a maximum residence time that receives water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct Filtration Plant. This treated water contains free chlorine as a disinfectant.

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- Cumbre - Represents a distribution system location with a maximum residence time that receives blended water from MWD's Weymouth, Diemer, and Jensen Filtration Plants. The location is representative of water in the Harbor and Eastern Los Angeles areas. The treated water contains chloramines as a disinfectant.

#### MWD Sample Sites

- Jensen Plant Effluent - Represents treated surface water from the west branch of the California Aqueduct.
- Weymouth Plant Effluent - Represents a blend of treated surface water originating from the Colorado River Aqueduct and the east branch of the California Aqueduct.
- WB-4 - Represents the final distribution point for treated water for the West Los Angeles area.
- LA-21 - Represents the final distribution point for treated water for the Palos Verde area.

#### **SAMPLE COLLECTION AND TESTING**

The collection of all samples was performed by the ACWM, Environmental Toxicology Laboratory (ETL), under the direction of a trained collector using methods approved by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Samples were subjected to a series of tests (as agreed upon by the DPW, LADWP, and the MWD), which were conducted by the ACWM ETL and its contracted laboratories in order to detect the presence of the following: inorganic compounds, radionuclide, and volatile organic compounds. In addition, the samples were also tested for turbidity, which is cloudiness of the water caused by suspended particles and is an important measure for water quality.

Following the testing process, DPH contacted the CDPH Drinking Water Branch, the lead regulatory agency for LADWP and MWD, and requested that they interpret ACWM ETL's analytical results and comment on said results. On April 29, 2010, CDPH responded by stating they had reviewed the results, all of which met California drinking water standards and are representative of the water quality that both LADWP and MWD consistently achieve (Attached).

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## **CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the aforementioned review and subsequent declaration by the State regarding the samples collected for this study, it is the conclusion of the participating County departments that the water provided by LADWP and MWD to the residents and businesses in Los Angeles County is safe for consumption. When viewing the EWG study however, it is important to note that MWD, LADWP, and CDPH all have serious reservations with respect to the ranking methodology employed by EWG. Specifically, according to the CDPH, the methodology was never reviewed or endorsed by any regulatory agency and constitutes not only an inappropriate use of water quality data and standards, but also an inaccurate interpretation of drinking water standards. Therefore, any attempt to draw conclusions on the quality of the drinking water in the greater Los Angeles area based on the contents of the study should take into consideration the aforementioned reservations and concerns. Due to the fact that the drinking water provided by LADWP and MWD reliably meets all drinking water regulations, coupled with the reservations and concerns expressed by LADWP, MWD, and CDPH in relation to the EWG study, no recommendations for further action are being made at this time.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me or your staff may contact Deputy Chief Executive Officer Jacqueline White, Public Safety, at (213) 893-2374.

WTF:BC:JAW  
SW:DC:cc

### **Attachment**

c:     Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
       County Counsel  
       Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures  
       Public Health  
       Public Works



MARK B HORTON, MD, MSPH  
Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
Governor

April 29, 2010

Alfonso Medina  
Director, Environmental Protection Bureau  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
5050 Commerce Drive  
Baldwin Park, CA 91706-1423

Dear Mr. Medina:

**2010 DRINKING WATER QUALITY STUDY**

In December 2009, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM), the Director of Public Health (DPH), and the Director of Public Works (DPW) to test drinking water quality in the City of Los Angeles in response to an Environmental Working Group (EWG) report. In response, the County conducted sampling at locations representing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (Metropolitan) treatment plants, pump stations, and distribution system. The samples were obtained from eight locations served by the LADWP and Metropolitan and analyzed at the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commissioner Weights and Measures Environmental Toxicology Laboratory.

The California Department of Public Health (Department) has reviewed the analytical results and compared them to the historical data reported to the Department at these locations. The results indicate that all 31 parameters of concern meet California drinking water standards and are representative of the water quality that both LADWP and Metropolitan consistently achieve. Attached is a copy of a summary showing the location of the sampling sites and the analytical results (Enclosure 1). If you have any questions concerning this letter, please call me at (818) 551-2044 or Grazyna Newton at (881) 551-2029.

Sincerely,

Jeff O'Keefe, P.E.  
District Engineer  
Metropolitan District

Mr. Alfonso Medina

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Enclosure (1): Summary of Analytical Results

cc: Richard Lavin, Chief  
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