

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Wastewater coalition responds to editorial

April 1, 2009

Regarding "A monstrous waste/Despite drought, city dumping precious reclaimed water in ocean" (Editorial, March 22):

As chairman of the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority, I wish to state that it is a shame indeed that we throw away so much treated water into the ocean without it being put to further beneficial use. In a time when our main sources of water, the Colorado River and the State Water Project, are strained to provide a basic supply, we need to both reclaim and reuse this most precious resource. The restrictions on reclaimed water by the state essentially do not allow landscaping irrigation in single-family residences where most water is used. Reclaimed water use is largely confined to irrigating parks, golf courses and public right of ways. It doesn't have to be this way, though.

While attending the National Water Reuse Conference in Tampa Bay in 2007, I toured the St. Petersburg reclaimed water system. It is supplying water to more than 10,000 single-family homes for landscaping purposes, and to fire hydrants. Also, it is cleaned to a lower level than the water we are throwing away, and is sold at a very inexpensive price. California regulators don't like the Florida model, which is absolute nonsense. Florida values people's health and safety as does California. We need to learn from the Florida model and figure out how we can make it work here as well. We at the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority (cities of Chula Vista, Coronado, Del Mar, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, National City and Poway; the Lemon Grove Sanitation District; the Padre Dam Municipal and Otay Water districts; and the county of San Diego) contribute about 35 percent of the water that is and could be reclaimed. Consequently, we strongly support efforts to reclaim more water. Inaction is not an option. We are rapidly running out of water, prices are skyrocketing and mandatory rationing is not far away. To not use what we have at our ready disposal is indeed a monstrous waste.

MARK ROBAK