

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is the Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project?



### The Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project (Project)

This three-pronged approach will alleviate the region's severe water supply shortage and develop a new drought-proof water supply. As a long-term climate adaptation and water supply strategy, the project includes the development of three new water sources for the Monterey Peninsula, including:

**A desalination plant** to safely draw and desalt seawater and brackish groundwater from underneath the beach and ocean floor using slant well technology to avoid harm to sea life and bringing a drought-proof, permanent water source to the Peninsula.

**An aquifer storage and recovery program (ASR)** to capture excess winter flows from the Carmel River and store it in the Seaside aquifer for use during the dry summer months.

**An expansion of Pure Water Monterey**, a water recycling and replenishment project that recycles wastewater and injects highly purified drinking water into the Seaside groundwater basin.



Rendering of the future desalination facility



Aquifer Storage and Recovery

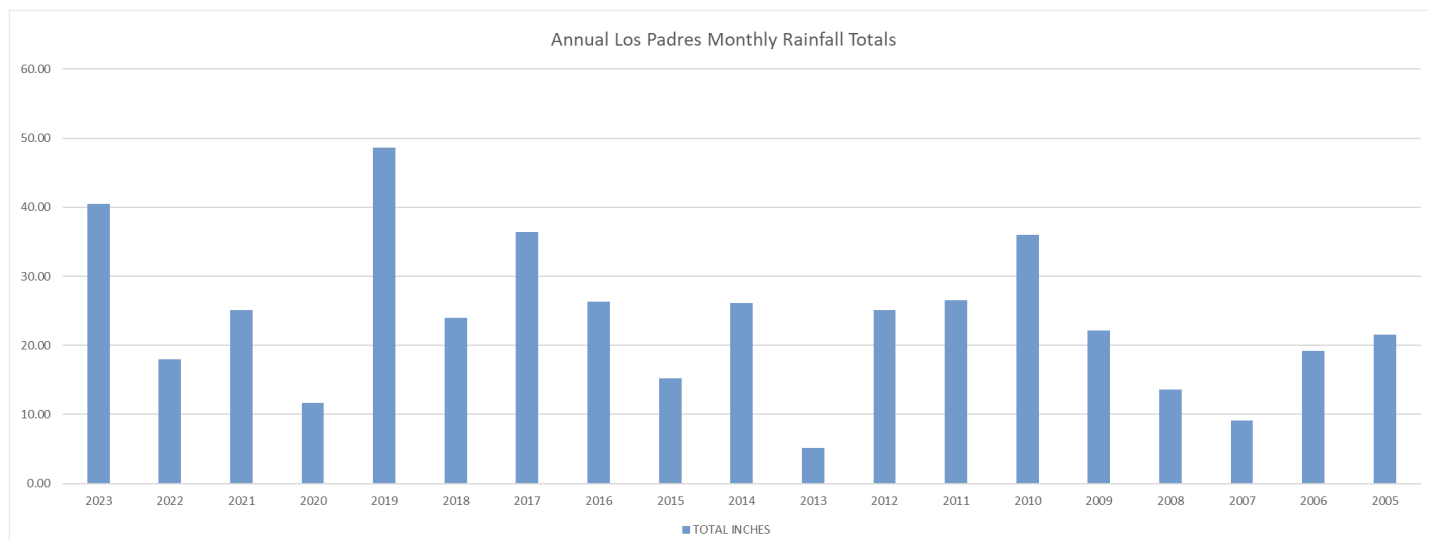
## Who is advancing the Water Supply Project?

The three-pronged approach includes the following partnerships:



## Why do we need the Water Supply Project?

California's weather extremes are becoming more prolonged and unpredictable – quickly swinging from drought and severe heat to devastating floods.



*The total annual rainfall, as tracked by inches, illustrates the variability of rainfall and weather whiplash. Since 2005, the Monterey Peninsula has had nine years below the average.*

On the Monterey Peninsula, the challenge of addressing more frequent periods of extended drought has been made more difficult due to State Water Board orders in 1995 and 2009 that require Cal-Am to significantly reduce pumping from the Carmel River, the historic source of the region's water supplies. The orders mandate a reduction of nearly 75% in Cal-Am's Monterey Peninsula's historic water supply and prohibits Cal-Am and MPWMD from serving any new customer connections until replacement sources are secured.

Cal-Am's Water Supply Project will restore the Monterey Peninsula's historic water supplies, protect ecosystems, prepare the region for future droughts and climate extremes, ensure long-term water reliability and economic stability and provide for sustainable future growth.

## Where does the Monterey Peninsula's water supply come from?

Monterey's existing water supplies include the Carmel River; native Seaside Basin Groundwater; Sand City Desalination; Aquifer Storage & Recovery (ASR) from the Carmel River, which is stored in Seaside Basin; and Pure Water Monterey, which is also injected and stored in Seaside Basin. These water supply sources provide 8,023 AFY in normal water years and 7,600 AFY in drought years.

## How does the Project restore ecosystems?

Desalination will permanently reduce the historic reliance on water from the Carmel River and provide a drought-proof water source for the region. Diversifying water supplies in Monterey – conserving, storing, reusing and repurposing water to its best and highest use – boosts endangered steelhead populations in the Carmel River and significantly benefits habitats. The sub-surface slant well technology used to draw ocean water protects marine life by using the beach sand as a natural filter.

## How does the Project address drought?

The Water Supply Project's multi-faceted approach is drought-proof and better than a single-source solution because it adds desalination to ASR, Pure Water Monterey, and Carmel River supplies, which are impacted in drought years. Desalination brings a reliable water source needed to support community demand and allow for future growth. The project builds redundancy into the system – a critical approach for all water supply systems – to continue providing water if one component becomes temporarily unavailable.

## Will the Project allow for more housing and commercial development?

Monterey County has a severe lack of adequate, affordable housing, a problem that cannot be rectified without the development of additional water sources. Developing a new source of sustainable water supply will lift our decades-long moratorium on much-needed new housing, attract businesses, provide jobs and enhance economic growth.

## What is seawater desalination?

It's a process by which ocean water is turned into fresh drinking water. Seawater is pumped through micro-fibered membranes, which remove salt and other impurities. The membrane is like a strainer that blocks out all material other than water. This and other treatment methods result in a finished product that is free of all materials before being inserted into the distribution system and supplied to homes and businesses.

## Will we ever run out of ocean water due to desalination?

No. Ocean water covers more than 75% of the earth and in some areas is nearly 7 miles deep.

## Is desalination proven technology?

Yes. There are more than 15,000 desalination plants operating throughout the world today. The United States alone has more than 250 desalination plants, some of which have been operating for decades. In California, there are 8 operational desalination plants with 3 undergoing planning and design. Two operational desalination plants are currently operating in Monterey Bay (Monterey Bay Aquarium and Sand City).

## What is the lifetime of the Project's desalination plant?

The desalination plant should operate for approximately 50 years, providing water for many decades to come.

## How much water will be produced by desalination?

The desalination plant can provide 4.8 million gallons per day (MGD) or approximately 5,377 acre feet of water per year.

## Will the Pure Water Monterey expansion and ASR supply enough water for the region's needs?

No. Even if both projects were fully operational, they would not provide a sufficient, reliable and drought-proof water supply for the community into the future. Both climate change and drought affect the reliability and sufficiency of recycled water and aquifer storage. Desalination is drought-proof and a critical complement to the Pure Water Monterey expansion and ASR projects.

## How will the Project affect water affordability for Cal-Am customers?

Cal-Am is pursuing alternate sources of water for the Monterey Peninsula with the goal of keeping rates as low as possible now and in the future. Ensuring a safe and reliable system calls for ongoing investment in upgrading and replacing water infrastructure.

As a public utility regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission, Cal-Am presents proposed rate increases to the CPUC for review and approval before costs can be passed onto customers. California American Water is securing grants and low interest loans to help offset the construction of the desal plant. Additionally, Cal-Am maintains several programs to ensure affordable water for essential uses. Cal-Am's Customer Assistance Program helps families undergoing financial hardship. Cal-Am recently received approval from the California Public Utilities Commission to increase the discount on a typical bill for qualified residential customers in Central California from 30 percent to 35 percent. Eligible water and wastewater customers can apply for a monthly discount on their charges. In 2024, this program provided more than \$1,270,000 in financial assistance to Monterey Peninsula customers. Cal-Am also maintains a crisis assistance fund for customers in conjunction with the Monterey United Way and is piloting a unique program for families living in multi-unit buildings.