
CONSENT

Bill No: AB 580
Author: Wallis (R)
Amended: 7/17/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/16/25
AYES: Limón, Seyarto, Allen, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/23/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Surface mining: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

SOURCE: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

DIGEST: This bill extends by fifteen years, until January 1, 2041, the authorization for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) to develop a single master reclamation plan (Metropolitan Reclamation Plan) to comply with its obligations under the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA).

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes within the Department of Conservation (DOC) the Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR), led by the Supervisor of Mine Reclamation and the State Mining Governing Board (SMGB).
- 2) Establishes SMARA to create a comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy to prevent or minimize adverse environmental effects, reclaim mined lands to a usable condition, encourage production and conservation of minerals, and eliminate hazards to public health and safety, as specified: (Public

Resources Code (PRC) §§2710 *et seq.*)

- a) Under SMARA, prohibits a person from conducting surface mining operations unless a permit is obtained from, a reclamation plan has been submitted to and approved by, and financial assurances for reclamation have been approved by the lead agency for the operation, as specified: (PRC §2770)
- 3) Exempts from SMARA, until January 1, 2026, Metropolitan for emergency excavations or grading conducted by Metropolitan for its own operation and infrastructure for the purpose of averting, alleviating, repairing, or restoring damage to property due to imminent or recent floods, disasters, or other emergencies: (PRC §2714(j))
- a) Creates, until January 1, 2026, special provisions under SMARA for Metropolitan's operations within the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, or Ventura, including to, amongst others, authorize Metropolitan to prepare a master reclamation plan for its operations. (PRC §2715.6)

This bill extends, until January 1, 2041, the authorization for Metropolitan to develop a multi-county Metropolitan Reclamation Plan to comply with its obligations under SMARA.

Background

SMARA. Administered by the DOC, SMARA provides a comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy with the regulation of surface mining operations to assure that adverse environmental impacts are minimized and mined lands are reclaimed to a useable condition (PRC §§2710 *et seq.*).

AB 442 (Mayes, Chapter 166, Statutes of 2021). When Metropolitan completed construction of the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) and began operation in 1941, it retained ownership of the land beneath and adjacent to the CRA, including the excess stone, gravel, and sand used to construct the project. Metropolitan uses those materials to restore, repair, protect, and maintain berms, access roads, and pipelines. The desert is an area subject to heavy rains and flash floods. Maintaining berms and siphons to redirect water laden with sediment around the aqueduct is essential to maintain water quality. In addition, heavy rains and localized flooding in 2018, for example, caused erosion damage to 35 sites and exposed parts of the CRA pipeline in 26 places over nine miles. Metropolitan used

the sand and gravel materials from its existing borrow sites adjacent to the CRA to make repairs to the exposed pipeline and washed out roads.

Metropolitan currently maintains 19 borrow pit sites that supply aggregate materials for repairs and maintenance of the CRA and other infrastructure. Most of the material at these sites are spoils from tunnel construction of the CRA. However, in 2017, San Bernardino and Riverside counties informed Metropolitan it had to comply with SMARA because some sites involved the removal of native soils, which constitutes a mining activity under SMARA.

Instead of requiring Metropolitan to prepare a reclamation plan for each county, the Legislature passed AB 422 (Mayes, Chapter 166, Statutes of 2021), which allows Metropolitan to use a master reclamation plan for all 19 borrow pit sites across the various counties until January 1, 2026. According to information provided by the author, the master reclamation plan was approved by the SMGB in April 2023. In addition to the annual report required by SMARA, Metropolitan is also required to provide a separate subreport for each individual surface mining operation that provides information for the annual report. In its 2024 annual inspection, SMGB found all aspects of Metropolitan's surface mining operation were compliant with SMARA.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/19/25)

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (source)
Association of California Cities - Orange County
Association of California Water Agencies
California Council for Environmental & Economic Balance
California Municipal Utilities Association
California Special Districts Association
Calleguas Municipal Water District
Central Basin Municipal Water District
Desert Water Agency
Eastern Municipal Water District
El Segundo Chamber of Commerce
Foothill Municipal Water District
Gateway Chambers Alliance
Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce
Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce
Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce
Inland Empire Utilities Agency

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County Business Federation
Municipal Water District of Orange County
Orange County Business Council
Orange County Taxpayers Association
Rancho Water
San Diego County Water Authority
Southern California Contractors Association
Southwest California Legislative Council
The Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce
Three Valleys Municipal Water District
Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce
West Basin Municipal Water District
West Ventura County Business Alliance
Western Municipal Water District
Western Riverside Council of Governments

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/19/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author’s office, “AB 580 is a common-sense solution that ensures the Metropolitan Water District can maintain the Colorado River Aqueduct—a vital lifeline for 19 million Southern Californians—without unnecessary red tape. This bill removes the sunset date on a proven process that’s worked since 2022, allowing faster repairs, consistent environmental oversight, and lower costs. The Aqueduct’s maintenance shouldn’t be bogged down by inconsistent county regulations when we’ve already seen the state-level plan succeed. AB 580 keeps our water flowing safely and efficiently for the long haul.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/23/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste

Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Solache, Soria,
Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO VOTE RECORDED: Bryan, Chen, Ellis, Nguyen, Sanchez, Schultz, Sharp-
Collins, Wicks

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