



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

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## METROPOLITAN BOARD AUTHORIZES EXTENSION OF DIAMOND VALLEY LAKE BOAT RAMP

### **Top Southland fishing lake could reopen to private boat launches by early next year**

Diamond Valley Lake—one of the premier fishing destinations in Southern California—could reopen for private boating by early next year as Metropolitan Water District’s Board of Directors today authorized the completion of the lake’s boat ramp.

Images of the less-than-half-full lake near Hemet in southwest Riverside County have served as a reminder of the water supply impacts on Southern California—from the state’s ongoing drought—after Metropolitan suspended private boat launches at the lake last October as record low water levels dropped below the existing launch ramp.

Storage levels at the region’s largest lake have since receded to the lowest point since Diamond Valley Lake opened to public boating and fishing in October 2003. Metropolitan has continued to draw on the 4,500-surface-acre reservoir to meet the region’s supply needs in response to the water challenges caused by drought and environmental restrictions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in Northern California. Today, storage in Diamond Valley Lake is just under 43 percent of capacity.

“If there is a positive side to these unprecedented water supply challenges it’s that it has provided us with the opportunity to take advantage of low lake levels to complete the boat launch ramps and possibly reopen the lake to private boating,” said Metropolitan board Chairman Timothy F. Brick.

“From the moment we contemplated suspending private boat launches last fall, we grappled with how we could keep the lake open to private boats in the face of severe drought,” Brick said. “However, the essential role Diamond Valley Lake has played in meeting the region’s water supply needs over the past three years cannot be downplayed. Southern California would be in a much worse supply situation without the supplies that have been drawn from Diamond Valley Lake.”

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Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger praised the efforts of the local boating, fishing and business community in helping Metropolitan address the boat ramp issue. Since April, Metropolitan has received petitions signed by 1,000 boaters stating they would be willing to help fund an extension through increased fees.

“Cooperatively exploring proposed solutions to the boat ramp situation has allowed us to build on our partnership with the local community,” Kightlinger said.

Under today’s board action, lake user fees will be gradually increased over the next five years to help offset the costs of extending three lanes of the existing 11-lane ramp by 228 feet. Metropolitan estimates increased parking and launch fees would help recover in five years the estimated \$1.1 million in construction costs to complete the ramp.

Construction of the ramp extension is tentatively scheduled to begin in October and be completed as early as February 2010. In the meantime, Metropolitan plans to continue seeking other potential grant and funding sources to help cover the construction costs.

Nearly doubling the region’s surface water storage capacity when it was dedicated in 2000, Diamond Valley Lake has a storage capacity of 810,000 acre-feet of water, with a surface water elevation of 1,756 feet above sea level. Since the lake reached its capacity in June 2006, Metropolitan has relied heavily on Diamond Valley Lake’s stored supplies to meet member agency needs, dropping lake levels by more than 100 feet.

The lake currently holds about 347,000 acre-feet, with plans to possibly increase stored supplies by year’s end. An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by five to seven people in a year.

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*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.*