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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **WEST BASIN MOVES PROPOSED DESAL FACILITY FORWARD DESPITE GROWING PUBLIC OPPOSITION**

*West Basin Board voted 4-1 to pursue its proposed ocean desalination plant despite cries from opposition to pursue smarter options*

**CARSON (November 19, 2019)**—A coalition of environmentalists, climate and public health advocates, and concerned LA County residents gathered outside a West Basin Special Board Meeting to oppose its proposed 20 million gallons-per-day\* ocean desalination facility on the coast in El Segundo, citing major fiscal and environmental concerns. The West Basin Municipal Water District, a water wholesaler that serves nearly one million people in 17 cities in Los Angeles County, released the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project on Oct. 23 before holding the five-hour hearing yesterday.

More than 60 concerned citizens convened outside before the agency's public hearing, with many providing testimony during the hearing urging the elected five-member Board of Directors to reject the FEIR. Despite broad-based public opposition, and concerns raised about the adequacy of the FEIR by at least two public agencies, the Board voted 4-1 on two separate votes to certify the FEIR and move ahead with the project.

"We are beyond disappointed," said Bruce Reznik, Executive Director of Los Angeles Waterkeeper. "It was hard to walk out of that hearing not believing that West Basin had their minds made up on this project long before the meeting and vote, and the agency's ratepayers as well as our climate and marine environment will pay the price. Unfortunately, our only resource at this point is to legally challenge this wholly inadequate and unacceptable FEIR. We will also continue working with the Smarter Water LA coalition to challenge this irresponsible project as it seeks additional permits."

Dozens of local environmental, environmental justice, climate and tribal NGOs, public agencies, and cities that purchase water from West Basin raised concerns about the impact of this proposed plant on marine life, our climate, coastal tourism and rising water rates.

"It was so heartening to see dozens of our partners and concerned community members come together. The strong turnout demonstrates how passionate people are about tackling climate change and protecting marine life in the Santa Monica Bay," said Nancy Shrodes, Associate Director of Policy and Outreach at Heal the Bay.

Climate impacts and environmental justice issues were at the forefront of the opposition's concerns. As the most energy-intensive, climate-impacting, and most expensive water supply option in LA, the proposed ocean desal plant brings along with it air quality concerns (from adding an estimated 44,702 metric tons of CO2 into our atmosphere every year\*\*) and potentially dramatic increases in ratepayers' water bills. A recent report from the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation concluded that the proposed desalination project in Huntington Beach will interfere with the Human Right to Water policies adopted by the State of California.

"It is true the LA region needs to invest in local water supplies, which is why LA Waterkeeper and our partners in the Smarter Water LA coalition have been leaders in advocating for greater conservation, stormwater capture and reuse, wastewater recycling, and groundwater remediation," noted Bruce Reznik. "In fact, the LA region will be investing more than \$20B over the next twenty years on these types of projects that are more climate-friendly, more cost-effective, and will create better green jobs than ocean desalination."

*\*If West Basin pursues their regional project, the capacity is estimated to be 60 million gallons-per-day.*

*\*\*Powers Engineering, 2018. [Assessment of Energy Intensity and Greenhouse Emissions of Proposed West Basin Desalination Plant and Water Supply Alternatives.](#)*

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### **ABOUT SMARTER WATER LA**

The Smarter Water LA coalition (including Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Heal the Bay, Surfrider Foundation South Bay Chapter, Desal Response Group and dozens of supporters) believes that cost-effective and environmentally beneficial local water supply options should take precedence over ocean desalination. For more information, visit [www.SmarterWaterLA.org](http://www.SmarterWaterLA.org).