



General Information



City of San Diego Water History

1850 -- California becomes a state and the City of San Diego is incorporated.

1852 -- City declared insolvent. Management oversight by the state instituted.

1873 -- San Diego Water Company formed to provide an organized water supply to serve a population of approximately 2,000. Water is \$.25 per bucket. An army private soldier makes \$13.00 per month.



Barrett Dam - 1927

1885 -- Sewer service begins along the lower portion of 5th and 6th Avenues with the raw effluent discharged directly into San Diego Bay.

1887 -- Old Town Reservoir built to store water from 12 wells located in the San Diego River bed adjacent to the old Presidio.

1889 -- The San Diego Flume Company completes a 35.6 mile wooden flume to carry water from Boulder Creek to La Mesa Reservoir (the duck pond at Grossmont Summit).

1897 -- Lower Otay Dam completed by what becomes the Southern California Mountain Water Company. Construction of Morena Dam begun. Work is soon suspended.

1901 -- Following a vote of the people, the City of San Diego enters into the municipal water supply business by purchasing the facilities of the San Diego Water Company.

1906 -- The Lower Otay water supply is connected to the City's distribution system by the Bonita Pipeline to a filtration plant located at Chollas Heights Reservoir.



February 22, 1889
Dignitaries go for a ride on the just-completed San Diego Flume

1912 -- The City purchases the Otay River-Cottonwood Creek system from the Southern California Mountain Water Company. Morena Dam completed. The City of East San Diego incorporated.

1914 -- The City purchases Morena Dam.

1916 -- A series of very heavy rain storms, in conjunction with the alleged rainmaking activities of Charles Hatfield, hit the county. The San Diego River floods Mission Valley from cliff to cliff cutting all highways to the north. Lower Otay Dam, built without a spillway, tops out and bursts, flooding the Otay Valley.

1918 -- Lower Otay Dam, now renamed Savage Dam, reconstruction completed. Lake Hodges Dam and San Dieguito Dam completed by the Santa Fe Land & Improvement Co. Both were later purchased by the City.

1922 -- City forces complete Barrett Dam and the Dulzura Conduit built to link Morena Reservoir and the Cottonwood Creek/Pine Creek watersheds with the City's water supply system at Lower Otay.

1923 -- City of East San Diego consolidates into the City of San Diego.

1928 -- Construction of what is now Sutherland Dam is halted after only one year of construction. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) is formed to bring Colorado River Water to Southern California. San Diego was not a member.

1930 -- The U.S. Supreme Court determines the City of San Diego has prior and paramount rights to the water of the San Diego River.

1931 -- Current San Diego City Charter adopted formalizing the Council-Manager form of government.

1935 -- With water rights secured, the City completes construction of El Capitan Dam and the El Capitan Pipeline connecting it to the City's water supply system. University Heights Filtration Plant enlarged.

1936 -- The City decommissions water well fields operated in Mission Valley.

1943 -- San Vicente Dam and pipeline are dedicated following two years of construction. This provides another source of water for San Diego's booming wartime population. The U.S. Navy completes the City's first sewerage treatment plant to reduce the health risks to sailors on ships in San Diego Bay.

1944 -- The San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) is formed, with the City joining, and became a member agency of MWD. CWA's first task is to complete a pipeline connecting the county with MWD's water supply system.

1947 -- The first MWD water from the Colorado River flows into San Vicente Reservoir. This ends San Diego's total dependence on local sources for water.

1950 -- The City of San Diego takes over operation of Murray Reservoir and commissions the Alvarado Filtration Plant. The water treatment plants at University Heights and Chollas Heights are decommissioned.

1954 -- Sutherland Dam, dormant since 1928, completed and connected by pipeline and natural streambeds to San Vicente Reservoir.

1956 -- South San Diego, Nestor, San Ysidro, and part of Otay Mesa annexed to the City. Service charges for sewer service instituted for the first time.

1958 -- The sewerage function transferred to the newly renamed Water Utilities Department.

1960 -- Miramar Dam completed and Miramar Filtration Plant put into commission. Lake Murray purchased from Helix Irrigation District.

1962 -- What is now Tierrasanta annexed.

1963 -- The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Metropolitan Sewerage System, now the Metropolitan Wastewater System, are put into service ending regular

direct discharge of raw wastewater into the San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean. What is now Rancho Bernardo, Rancho Penasquitos and the San Pasqual Valley annexed to the City.

1996 and 1997 -- The wastewater collection and treatment functions are separated from the Water Utilities Department forming the Metropolitan Wastewater Department. The Water Utilities Department becomes the Water Department.

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