



- **Board of Directors**
Engineering, Operations, and Technology Committee

9/9/2025 Board Meeting

7-5

Subject

Amend the Capital Investment Plan for fiscal years 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 to include the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility project; the General Manager has determined that the proposed action is exempt or not subject to CEQA

Executive Summary

The Palos Verdes Reservoir is a covered, finished water reservoir located on the eastern slopes of the Palos Verdes hills, within an area designated by the Los Angeles County Fire Department as a “very high” fire hazard zone. Following the January 2025 fires in Southern California, the Los Angeles County Fire Department recommended the installation of a helicopter-accessible tank to help protect these vulnerable areas. Since that time, staff have been coordinating with the County on potential locations and requirements for the tank. This project will serve to protect Metropolitan facilities and portions of the surrounding area from climate change-induced wildfire risks and is consistent with Metropolitan’s district-wide climate adaptation and fire management planning.

The Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility consists of an open-top tank and supporting infrastructure that allows helicopters to collect water to fight nearby fires quickly. Approval of this project at this time will allow staff to take advantage of a construction contractor currently on-site to complete the infrastructure. The expeditious construction of the helicopter-accessible tank will assist in protecting Metropolitan’s facility and the surrounding community in the event of a wildfire.

This action amends the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for fiscal years 2024/25 and 2025/26 to include the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility project. See **Attachment 1** for the Allocation of Funds and **Attachment 2** for the Location Map.

Proposed Action(s)/Recommendation(s) and Options

Staff Recommendation: Option #1

Option #1

Amend the Capital Investment Plan for fiscal years 2024/25 and 2025/26 to include the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility project.

Fiscal Impact: Expenditure of \$895,000 in capital funds. It is not anticipated that adding the project listed above to the CIP will increase CIP expenditures in the current biennium beyond those the Board has previously approved.

Business Analysis: This option will enhance fire safety at the Palos Verdes Reservoir.

Option #2

Do not proceed with the project at this time.

Fiscal Impact: None

Business Analysis: This option would forego an opportunity to enhance safety and operational resiliency at the Palos Verdes Reservoir.

Alternatives Considered

Staff considered delaying the project and incorporating it into the next biennial CIP budget, but this action would delay the implementation of a dip tank for at least a year. Using an existing construction contract currently performing work on-site would expedite the construction process and allow for quicker completion. Installation of the dip tank allows first responders to save critical time and effectively fight fires by offering a strategically placed, quick-fill water source for aerial support. The selected alternative allows these benefits to accrue sooner. This helicopter dip tank offers Metropolitan an innovative way to safeguard life, property, and the environment to benefit the community and the Palos Verdes Reservoir facility.

Applicable Policy

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities

Related Board Action(s)/Future Action(s)

By Minute Item 53598, dated April 9, 2024, the Board appropriated a total of \$636.48 million for projects identified in the Capital Investment Plan for Fiscal Years 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.

Summary of Outreach Completed

Staff is working closely with the Los Angeles County Fire Department to get their input, and with local city and county officials, including the City of Rolling Hills Estates and the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors' Fourth Supervisorial District's office, to ensure local support.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action to amend the Capital Investment Plan to include the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility project is not defined as a project under CEQA because it involves the creation of a general funding mechanism and general policy and procedure making with no commitment to proceed with any specific project at this time. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4)). The design, procurement, and construction associated with the project is exempt because it consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15303.) Also, the proposed action is exempt from CEQA because it consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15304.)

CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

Details and Background

Background

The Palos Verdes Reservoir, constructed in 1939 as part of Metropolitan's original treated water distribution system, lies in the City of Rolling Hills Estates. The Palos Verdes Reservoir is a covered, treated water storage facility supplied by the Weymouth plant through the Palos Verdes Feeder or the Diemer plant through the Second Lower Feeder. Its function is to facilitate flows within the southwest portion of Metropolitan's distribution system. Two service connections to member agencies are also located on the reservoir site. The reservoir is currently bypassed due to nitrification issues.

The Palos Verdes Reservoir is located on the eastern slopes of the Palos Verdes hills, within an area designated by the Los Angeles County Fire Department as a “very high” fire hazard zone. In the event of a wildfire, the reservoir and its facilities, including a District house, a field office, a chlorination station, service connections, and the surrounding community, are potentially at risk. Any water stored in the reservoir would be inaccessible to fire crews for aerial support due to its floating membrane cover. Following the catastrophic Pacific Palisades and Eaton Canyon/Altadena wildfires in January 2025, Metropolitan and the County of Los Angeles Fire Department discussed approaches to provide additional local water resources for fire suppression. These discussions highlighted the benefits of installing a helicopter dip tank at the reservoir site as a way to protect not only the Metropolitan assets in this area, but also surrounding communities in this potentially vulnerable area. Local agencies and jurisdictions such as the West Basin Municipal Water District, California Water Service, the Los Angeles County Supervisor’s Office, and peninsula cities, including the City of Rolling Hills Estates, were all informed of and are supportive of this effort. External Affairs has also reached out to nearby residents to inform them of the project and expected construction activities at the reservoir site. This project will serve to protect Metropolitan facilities and portions of the surrounding area from climate change-induced wildfire risks and is consistent with Metropolitan’s district-wide climate adaptation and fire management planning. An opportunity exists to install this facility in an expedited manner by utilizing an existing construction contract currently underway at the Palos Verdes Reservoir. Staff recommends proceeding with installing a Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank at this time. The proposed dip tank provides approximately 4,000 gallons of storage capacity and would be able to refill at a rate of 750 gallons per minute, which meets fire department requirements.

Other efforts are underway to enhance Metropolitan’s fire resilience. In May 2023, Metropolitan’s Board amended the Capital Investment Plan to include the Diemer Helicopter Hydrant Facility project. That project aimed to help protect Diemer by giving firefighter helicopters a convenient and dedicated facility to fill their water tanks when protecting the Diemer plant and surroundings from wildfires. The Diemer Helicopter Hydrant Facility project will be completed in September 2025. The recent catastrophic Pacific Palisades and Eaton Canyon/Altadena wildfires highlighted the benefits of such a facility, which would reduce Metropolitan’s risks and increase preparedness. To this end, staff plan to include a new CIP project in the 2026-2028 biennial budget to evaluate fire-resilience needs throughout Metropolitan’s facilities.

In April 2024, the Board appropriated funds and authorized the General Manager to initiate or proceed with work on all capital projects identified in the CIP, subject to any limits on the General Manager’s authority and CEQA requirements. Board authorization is required to commence work on new projects not originally included in the Board-authorized CIP. The Palos Verdes Helicopter Dip Tank was initially intended to be completed as a minor capital project with a budget of less than \$400,000 under the General Manager’s authority. This project’s capital expenditures will exceed this authority. Staff recommends that the Board amend the current CIP to add this project.

This action amends the CIP to include the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility project. It is not anticipated that the addition of this project to the CIP will increase CIP expenditures in the current biennium beyond the amount appropriated by the Board. Funds required for work to be performed pursuant to the subject projects after fiscal year 2025/26 will be budgeted within the Capital Investment Plan Appropriation for fiscal years 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank – Design and Construction

Planned improvements at the Palos Verdes Reservoir site include installation of an 8-inch diameter, approximately 700 feet long supply line from an existing blow-off structure to the proposed tank site, installation of an open-top 4,000-gallon helicopter dip tank, installation of associated isolation and check valves and concrete pads, and removal of trees as needed to provide clearance for helicopter maneuvers. When in service, the tank will automatically refill itself after each use.

To accomplish this work, staff recommend taking advantage of change order authority under Contract 2026 for which work at the Palos Verdes Reservoir is currently in progress. Contract 2026 was awarded to J.F. Shea Construction Inc. (J.F. Shea) to rehabilitate PCCP portions of the Second Lower Feeder and modify an existing bypass line at the Palos Verdes Reservoir. The project, referred to as Second Lower Feeder Prestressed Concrete

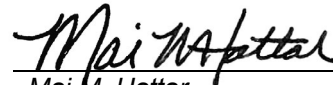
Cylinder Pipe Rehabilitation Reach 3B, is approximately 96 percent complete and scheduled to be completed by November 2025. The change order amount is within the General Manager's authority, and no additional authorization is required.

A total of \$895,000 is required for this action. Allocated funds include \$77,000 for design activities; \$75,000 for procurement of the dip tank; \$500,000 for construction by J.F. Shea; \$112,000 for Metropolitan force construction which includes system tie-ins and steel pipeline coating; \$66,000 for inspection; \$45,000 for environmental support and project management; and \$20,000 for startup and testing. **Attachment 1** provides the allocation of funds.

Engineering Services' performance metrics for final design and inspection of projects with a construction cost of less than \$3 million are 9 to 15 percent. For this project, the performance metric goal for final design is approximately 11.2 percent of the total construction cost, and the metric for inspection is approximately 9.6 percent. The construction cost for the helicopter dip tank at the Palos Verdes Reservoir is estimated at \$687,000.

Project Milestone

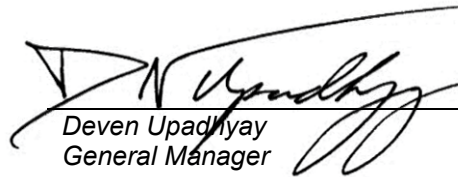
September 2025 – Complete design and construction of the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank Facility



8/28/2025

Mai M. Hattar
Chief Engineer
Engineering Services

Date



8/28/2025

Deven Upadhyay
General Manager

Date

Attachment 1 – Allocation of Funds

Attachment 2 – Location Map

Ref# es12709428

Allocation of Funds for Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank

	Current Board Action (Sep. 2025)
Labor	
Studies & Investigations	\$ -
Final Design	77,000
Owner Costs (Program mgmt., envir. monitoring)	45,000
Submittals Review & Record Drwgs.	20,000
Construction Inspection & Support	66,000
Metropolitan Force Construction	112,000
Materials & Supplies	75,000
Contracts	
J.F. Shea Inc.	500,000
Remaining Budget	-
Total	\$ 895,000

The total estimated cost to complete the Palos Verdes Reservoir Helicopter Dip Tank project is \$895,000.

