THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Committee Item
INFORMATION

Legislation and Communications Committee

9/14/2026 Committee Meeting

6a

Subject

Discuss 2027 Legislative Priorities

Executive Summary

Prior to the beginning of each legislative session, Metropolitan takes a fresh look at its legislative priorities and principles, seeking input from Metropolitan's Board of Directors, staff, and member agencies. This process is followed by an informational presentation to the Board and then a final vote by the Board to adopt the legislative priorities and principles for the coming year. Staff are beginning the process earlier this year to seek board input on the proposed priorities prior to the work by the Community and Workplace Culture Committee, as referenced below, and prior to the information item planned for November. The Board-adopted 2026 Legislative Priorities and Principles are found in **Attachment 1**.

Metropolitan's proposed 2027 legislative priorities are intended to advance policies that strengthen the reliability, resiliency, affordability, and quality of Southern California's water supplies. Once the Board adopts priorities, they will guide Metropolitan's advocacy and engagement on policy and budget issues that support a diverse and sustainable water supply portfolio and protect the interests of Metropolitan, its member agencies, and the communities they serve.

The proposed priorities presented below are intended to highlight the key issues Metropolitan staff have identified as actionable, mission-focused policy objectives for Metropolitan to advance in the upcoming legislative session. In November, the Board will also consider a more exhaustive list of proposed policy principles covering a range of important issues that will be included within Metropolitan's 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles.

Fiscal Impact

None

Applicable Policy

By Minute Item 54347, dated December 9, 2025, the Board adopted the Legislative Priorities and Principles for 2026.

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 2461: Duties and Functions

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

On September 22, 2026, the Community and Workplace Culture Committee will consider legislative and regulatory priorities for disadvantaged communities as presented by member agencies and make a recommendation to the Legislation and Communications Committee for consideration in the 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles.

Details and Background

As Metropolitan prepares for the 2027-28 legislative session, staff have identified several key policy objectives that will guide the agency's advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels. These proposed priorities reflect Metropolitan's continued commitment to providing a safe, reliable, resilient, and affordable water supply for Southern California.

1. Strengthen Colorado River water supply resiliency and reliability by ensuring all water sectors contribute to reductions, securing funding to incentivize long-term water savings and reduce demands, and protecting power operations at Lake Mead and the Colorado River Aqueduct Transmission System, including upgrading facilities.
2. Strengthen State Water Project water supply resiliency and reliability by securing funding to repair subsidence impacts on the California Aqueduct, aligning the State Water Project water right permits with the term of the State Water Project contracts, in part, to support long-term infrastructure investments, advancing pre-construction efforts for the Delta Conveyance Project and Sites Reservoir, and supporting alternative compliance strategies that facilitate multi-benefit solutions for the Bay-Delta watershed.
3. Help mitigate the spread of golden mussels and other invasive species by creating new funding sources to help defray the costs of containment and develop new treatment technologies.
4. Support Metropolitan's ongoing operations and facilitate capital improvements to address aging infrastructure, adapt to climate change, respond to changing regulations and conditions, and ensure Metropolitan's regional system is adequate and reliable for all member agencies.
5. Conserve existing water supplies by supporting long-term non-functional turf conversion and tax exemptions for water conservation rebates.
6. Enhance local water supply resiliency and reliability by reauthorizing and funding programs to defray the costs of water recycling, desalination, and storage projects, and advance pre-construction of Pure Water Southern California.
7. Protect drinking water quality and support access to safe and reliable drinking water, including by upholding the polluter pays principle.

These proposed priorities are intended to provide a framework for Metropolitan's legislative advocacy in 2027 and focus engagement with policymakers and stakeholders on issues of greatest importance to the region. Staff welcomes the Board's input on the proposed priorities and will incorporate that direction into Metropolitan's legislative strategy for the coming year.

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Attachment 1 – 2026 Legislative Priorities and Principles

Ref# ea12717440

Attachment 1 - 2026 Leg Priorities and Principles

2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES AND PRINCIPLES

Metropolitan's Legislative Priorities and Principles lay out an integrated "One Water" collaborative approach on current, anticipated legislative water policy issues to effectively manage Southern California's watersheds, water resources, and water infrastructure to ensure long-term resilience and reliability for communities and ecosystems.

Staff use this document to determine Metropolitan's positions and advocate for these priorities and principles at the state and federal level through Metropolitan-sponsored legislation, engaging on bills, or pursuing state and federal funding.

Adopted by

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors

on

December 9, 2025

2026 Legislative Priorities

To help adapt to a changing climate, protect water resources, and partner with communities we serve, Metropolitan will work to support administrative and/or legislative actions and federal and state funding for the following priorities in 2026:

I. Top Legislative Priorities

1. Continue support for imported water supply resiliency and reliability, including planning for the Delta Conveyance Project, Sites Reservoir Project, Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Voluntary Agreements), and the development and implementation of post-2026 Colorado River operational guidelines.
2. Continue support for funding and policy to mitigate against the spread of golden mussels and other invasive species
3. Conserve existing water supplies and adapt to climate change by supporting demand management and water use efficiency, long-term non-functional turf conversion, and a federal tax exemption for water conservation rebates.
4. Support the development of water recycling projects, including Pure Water Southern California, to improve long-term supply reliability.
5. Support funding for regional conveyance, repairs to the State Water Project, and water storage improvements to ensure the region's water supply is adequate and reliable for all member agencies.
6. Protect drinking water quality and ensure access to safe and reliable drinking water, including upholding the polluter pays principle and supporting the ongoing cleanup of contaminated sites along the Colorado River.
7. Support adaptive approaches to ecosystem restoration in the Bay-Delta and Colorado River watersheds that takes into consideration evolving climate conditions, risk analyses, and best available science.
8. Improve water affordability, especially for disadvantaged communities, without burdening existing ratepayers.
9. Support cost-effective transition to zero-emission fleets and equipment, while ensuring operational reliability and maintaining emergency response capabilities.

2026 Legislative Policy Principles

The 2026 Legislative Policy Principles guide and inform Metropolitan's engagement on state and federal legislative and regulatory activities. They are updated annually and are developed in consultation with Metropolitan's subject matter experts and through outreach with the member agencies.

The policy principles address six strategic areas that inform Metropolitan's integrated approach and the Board-led process for developing the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water (CAMP4W). These policy areas include: (1) drinking water; (2) regional water resource management; (3) imported water supply; (4) sustainability, resiliency, and innovation; (5) infrastructure; and (6) system resiliency.

I. Drinking Water – Metropolitan provides high-quality, reliable drinking water in an economically responsible way to the Southern California region that surpasses all federal and state drinking water regulations.

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Water Quality and Treatment

1. Use best available science, occurrence, and health effects data, and appropriate cost-benefit analyses or economic feasibility to protect public health and improve water quality. Apply these principles when setting maximum contaminant levels, health advisories, or notification/response levels, in addition to assessing laboratory capacity, analytical methods, and other regulatory standards or guidance levels.
2. Apply the "polluter pays" principle such that parties responsible for introducing contaminants in or near drinking water sources are held liable for cleanup, and not the drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater facilities that subsequently store, transport, or treat the water.
3. Comply with new regulatory standards, including implementing treatment and mitigation measures, developing risk communication tools, and ensuring adequate time for implementation.
4. Protect source water quality, reduction of threats from invasive species, and mitigation of harmful algal blooms.
5. Improve the State Water Resource Control Board's knowledge of Constituents of Emerging Concern (CEC) in waters of the state and drinking water, including support for the CEC Action Fund.

B. Water Governance, Affordability, and Funding – Metropolitan supports efforts to provide access to safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water to all communities.

1. Improve water affordability throughout the region, especially for disadvantaged communities, without burdening existing ratepayers.
2. Help water systems to provide low-income ratepayer assistance programs in a way that is operationally and financially feasible, sustainable, and maintains consumer confidence in retail agencies while maintaining flexibility and preserving local operational authority.
3. Improve governance and long-term sustainability of non-compliant water systems, provide support for voluntary consolidations, and ensure that all receiving public water systems are consulted on potential consolidations. Increase local agency flexibility in determining fees for service and assessment amounts.
4. Ensure the limited resources of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund are prioritized for operation and maintenance costs, infrastructure improvements, and consolidation actions.
5. Actively monitor and engage in the implementation of the California Water Plan update to ensure alignment with the District's mission.

II. Regional Water Resource Management – Metropolitan's One Water Vision and the Board-led CAMP4W process promote collaboration with member agencies to adapt to climate change and plan for future water supply needs in a reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner

while maintaining flexibility and local autonomy.

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Conservation

1. Support tax exemptions and/or credits for water conservation or efficiency incentives, including but not limited to long-term conversion of non-functional turf, local stormwater capture, and other measures to reduce consumption of water or enhance the absorption and infiltration capacity of the landscape.
2. Encourage equitable water use efficiency and recycled water use among agricultural, industrial, and urban sectors.
3. Support retail water agencies' ability to meet the objectives of Conservation as a California Way of Life in a manner that maintains flexibility and protects local agency decision-making. Support efforts to ensure new and existing statutes and regulations are based on science; recognize regional distinctions (such as climate, land use, population, and hydrology); consider water affordability; and assess potential impacts to wastewater operations and recycled water projects.
4. Advance leak detection and water loss reduction. Support the development and implementation of flexible water loss standards for water systems.
5. Support the long-term conversion of non-functional turf in commercial, industrial, and institutional landscapes and ban installation of non-functional turf in new construction.

B. Desalination and Groundwater Remediation

1. Support brackish groundwater and seawater desalination projects, and impaired groundwater treatment projects, consistent with the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio, California's Water Supply Strategy and Metropolitan's CAMP4W goals.
2. Facilitate salinity control projects, including but not limited to source control, treatment, and concentrate management.
3. Advance research, pilot tests, and demonstration studies that encourage the development of environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient desalination technologies.

C. Recycled Water

1. Support the development of water recycling projects, including Pure Water Southern California, to improve long-term water supply reliability and maximize voluntary use of recycled water.
2. Improve flexibility of the state's water recycling grant program.
3. Implement the National Water Reuse Action Plan and California's Water Reuse Action Plan while preserving local flexibility and encouraging local, state, and federal coordination, research, and innovation.
4. Facilitate advancing direct potable reuse projects in California, including but not limited to streamlining the planning, development, and implementation of local and

regional potable reuse projects, as well as addressing research gaps, advancing scientific knowledge, and strengthening partnerships and outreach to further the development of potable reuse.

5. Promote voluntary on-site wastewater treatment systems if they comply with Title 22 and do not negatively affect municipal water recycling systems.

D. Local Supply Development

1. Protect and enhance flexibility and responsiveness in developing diverse, climate-resilient resource portfolios, as identified in CAMP4W and related initiatives, tailored to local needs that benefit overall regional reliability.
2. Promote integrated water resources development by advocating for clear, concise, and expedited regulations and policies that are easily understandable by the regulated community and public.
3. Expedite the development of new local resources and storage to help adapt to climate change and safeguard water system operations. Advance stormwater as a beneficial resource and facilitate the funding and permitting of stormwater capture projects with demonstrated local and regional water supply benefits and that promote holistic watershed health.
4. Advance Metropolitan's surface and groundwater storage and/or recovery programs with member agencies and other partners.

E. Watershed Management

1. Enhance watershed management to provide broad public benefits from the headwaters to the terminus, such as improved water quality and water supply reliability, reduced wildfire risks, reforestation and enhanced tree canopy, greater scientific understanding, and other environmental improvements.
2. Advance implementation of watershed management plans, including watershed research and multi-benefit forestry management projects.
3. Advance implementation of the California Water Resilience Portfolio and the Water Supply Strategy, consistent with Metropolitan's goals and objectives, to enhance watershed-scale coordination, management and planning, and support programs and funding that improve water resilience and watershed functions.

III. Imported Water Supply – Metropolitan provides imported water supplies to its member agencies from two primary sources: the Colorado River via the Colorado River Aqueduct and Northern California watersheds via the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the State Water Project (SWP).

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Bay-Delta Initiatives – Metropolitan is involved in several key regulatory and planning processes in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta related to the operation of the SWP. The goals are to improve both water supply reliability and ecosystems in the Delta estuary for threatened and endangered species. To advance these goals, Metropolitan supports collaborative scientific efforts to enhance understanding of how to restore and manage the Bay-Delta while reducing reliance on it, consistent with the 2009 Delta Reform Act (Delta Reform Act).

1. Advance Delta Conveyance and Delta habitat restoration in support of California's coequal goals of water supply reliability and Delta ecosystem restoration and the Governor's California Water Resilience Portfolio.
2. Improve scientific understanding of listed Delta fish and wildlife species and water project operations in the Delta, including data collection, real-time monitoring, and modeling. Promote the use of best available science to protect and restore aquatic species and habitats and enhance flexibility for water project operations while maintaining regulatory and statutory protections for species listed under the state and federal Endangered Species Act.
3. Support implementation of state policies adopted as part of the Delta Reform Act and water management package, including clarification of the monitoring, reporting, and enforcement provisions related to in-Delta diversions.
4. Protect water quality for beneficial uses consistent with California water rights priorities.
5. Advance the Delta Freshwater Pathway, through dredging, improved levees (including levee modernization for the existing Delta levee system), levee maintenance programs (including real-time monitoring), and secured Delta flood-fighting materials and stockpiles.
6. Modernize and effectively administer the California water rights system in the Delta watershed, including protecting stored water releases.
7. Advance the Sites Reservoir Project and the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Voluntary Agreements), consistent with the Board's action for these efforts.

B. Colorado River Resources – The Colorado River is a critical resource for the entire Southwest and many diverse ecosystems. Climate change has reduced the river's flow, and degradation of the Colorado River's water quality can cause economic, environmental, and human health impacts across the West. Declining inflow into the river also reduces generation of hydropower, increases dam infrastructure risk, and could reduce supply for the Basin States and Mexico. Metropolitan and other interested parties work to ensure we can continue to supply our communities with a safe and reliable water supply.

1. Authorize, implement, and fund the post-2026 operational guidelines consistent with Metropolitan's interests.
2. Support conservation and efficiency projects to enhance the resiliency of the Colorado River System and ensure that sufficient water is delivered to meet Metropolitan's water supply needs.
3. Support infrastructure repairs of improvements at Glen Canyon Dam that will allow for full downstream releases.
4. Support protection of hydropower generation and infrastructure repairs at Hoover Dam consistent with the Law of the River.
5. Support the cleanup of contaminated sites along the Colorado River by responsible parties. This includes, but is not limited to, uranium remediation in Moab, Utah; perchlorate remediation in Henderson, Nevada; hexavalent chromium remediation near Topock, Arizona; and a waste disposal site near Hoover Dam.
6. Stabilize the financial position of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program), ensure continued coordination between states and federal agencies to further the Program goals, and maintain the safe operation of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Paradox Valley Unit salinity control project until a viable long-term alternative is implemented.
7. Facilitate successful implementation of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program by conserving Colorado River water and creating habitat for threatened and endangered species.
8. Support federal, state, and local agency projects to address the environmental effects of conservation and efficiency projects, including the California Natural Resources Agency's Salton Sea Management Program.
9. Advance binational water conservation programs that benefit Colorado River supply augmentation and habitat restoration objectives.
10. Support settlement of tribal reserved rights claims in the Colorado River Basin that are consistent with the evolving Law of the River.

C. State Water Project – About 30 percent of Southern California's water comes from the SWP in an average year. Metropolitan works with state and federal agencies as well as other SWP contractors to manage threats to the project, address environmental needs, and augment water supplies through existing and potential collaborative transfers and groundwater banking agreements.

1. Address the impacts of subsidence on the SWP and prevent future damage caused by unsustainable groundwater pumping.
2. Repair and improve the joint state and federal facility and ensure that funding is equitably distributed between partners while maintaining SWP supply reliability.
3. Clean up contaminated groundwater storage basins used for Metropolitan water banking programs along the California Aqueduct.
4. Ensure public funding for non-water supply costs, including recreation, flood

protection, mitigation, environmental enhancement, and rehabilitation for multi-purpose SWP facilities.

IV. Sustainability, Resiliency, and Innovation – Metropolitan supports sustainable practices that improve water and power system resilience to help water agencies prepare and respond to a rapidly changing environmental landscape. Metropolitan strives to fulfill the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations in an environmentally and economically responsible way while maintaining local flexibility and local autonomy.

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Carbon Neutrality

1. Facilitate implementation of Metropolitan's Climate Action Plan to reduce Metropolitan's greenhouse gas emissions and reach carbon neutrality by 2045.
2. Assist the Department of Water Resources in reaching carbon neutrality for the SWP by 2045 in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner.
3. Improve, develop, and promote innovative climate adaptation solutions, including science-based strategies and tools that restore healthy soils, conserve water, support the tree canopy, or capture carbon.
4. Support cost-effective transition to zero-emission fleets and equipment, while ensuring operational reliability and maintaining emergency response capabilities.

B. Water/Energy Nexus

1. Facilitate energy efficiency and storage projects, and programs to reduce greenhouse gases and develop renewable resources.
2. Remove barriers and encourage energy sector investments in water conservation and energy management programs.
3. Preserve Metropolitan's ability to pursue a diverse set of supply options and oppose constraints on supply development, such as water resource loading orders based solely on energy intensity.
4. Ensure power costs are appropriate and proportional to the benefits received and that water system operations are not adversely affected by power-related legislation or administrative actions.
5. Use the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for water/energy nexus projects and maintain cap-and-invest allowances for Metropolitan and Department of Water Resources (i.e., State Water Contractors).
6. Maintain Metropolitan authority over energy-related matters relative to its system and operations (e.g., system reserve margin or resource adequacy requirements).

C. Renewable Energy

1. Define hydropower generation as renewable energy irrespective of a facility's nameplate generating capacity and include the provision of renewable energy credits for hydroelectric generation.
2. Enhance or expand hydropower at existing dams without adversely impacting the

financial or operational aspects of those dams or impacting entities with rights to power from existing resources that directly or indirectly impact Metropolitan's service area.

3. Improve federal hydropower relicensing for existing facilities, including SWP resources.

4. Incorporate renewable energy resources for the SWP and the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) that contribute to the state's climate goals, such as pumped hydroelectric energy, without compromising the primary purpose of these water supply and delivery projects. Ensure consideration of transmission limitations, cost and portfolio availability, and prevent shifting of any unrelated impacts to SWP or CRA facilities.

D. Environmental Stewardship

1. Ensure environmental compliance by improving the clarity and workability of regulatory and reporting requirements, promoting consistency, and reducing duplication while also protecting public health and the environment.

2. Facilitate non-mitigation habitat restoration projects that benefit endangered and threatened species and ecosystem health.

3. Advance research and partnerships in water science, including snowpack and streamflow monitoring, stormwater runoff, drinking water quality, salinity control, source water protection, soil moisture monitoring, healthy soils, and watershed research.

E. Workforce Development and Safety – Metropolitan is committed to ensuring the resiliency of its workforce and to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as workplace violence prevention, to promote the physical and mental safety and well-being of its workforce and the communities it serves.

1. Improve educational opportunities in the water sector, including career technical education and workforce development.

2. Strengthen training programs and certification processes for water system staff.

3. Promote safe work environments.

F. Innovation – Supporting and promoting innovation and emerging technologies continues Metropolitan's longstanding tradition of creatively solving complex challenges.

1. Advance research and development of new and emerging technologies, such as satellite- and computer-based systems to monitor source water quality, ecosystem health, and threatened and endangered species. Support technologies that measure and predict water use, evaporation, and moisture monitoring; expand coordination with technology incubators, research institutions, and other stakeholders.

2. Promote open water data platforms and sharing, including improving access to agency data, streamlining the collection and submission of water agency data, and promoting collaboration among federal, state, and local stakeholders.

V. Infrastructure – Metropolitan has a strategic priority to invest in key capital projects in its region to enable long-term, reliable water deliveries. Key projects identified in Metropolitan's Capital Investment Plan focus on improvements to the CRA, treatment plants, and distribution systems.

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Initiate, expedite, and defray the costs of planning, financing, constructing, repairing, and rehabilitating water and power infrastructure projects, including but not limited to general obligation bonds, tax-exempt municipal bonds, grants, low-interest loans, and direct appropriations. Ensure equitable cost-sharing of water and power infrastructure projects.

B. Expand funding programs, expedite project approval and reporting processes, and prevent project backlogs in state and federal funding or financing.

C. Support the "beneficiaries pay" approach as a financing mechanism for statewide projects and programs and oppose public goods charges or other charges levied on water agencies for funding broader public benefits.

D. Advocate for public share of costs, including mitigation, rehabilitation, and recreation, for multi-purpose water infrastructure.

E. Support new or expanded water and power infrastructure or programs that complement existing water supplies and operations to ensure reliability for all member agencies.

F. Support Metropolitan's ability to streamline procurement of public works construction contracts.

VI. System Resiliency – Metropolitan diligently maintains and significantly invests to safeguard a region-wide water supply and delivery system that is a cornerstone of Southern California's $1.6 trillion economy. Climate change and increasing weather extremes are serious challenges facing Metropolitan and its member agencies. Additionally, Metropolitan must be prepared to respond rapidly to natural disasters and security threats. Resiliency ensures that the systems for water supply, delivery and power remain strong, can return to service quickly, and are prepared to address future challenges.

Metropolitan supports administrative and/or legislative actions and funding that:

A. Climate Resiliency

1. Support local and regional drought resiliency projects to improve system flexibility; facilitate the integration of existing and planned local water supplies, distribution, and regional water facilities.

2. Advance planning and research into the potential risks of climate change on water and power resources and water quality and work to advance infrastructure improvements and/or other mechanisms to offset these risks.

3. Help offset the effects of climate change on imported and local water supplies through watershed protection and enhancement of water quality, supply, and demand-side management actions.

4. Recognize and help mitigate the significant differences in the capabilities and needs of communities and regions to respond to the impacts of climate change.

5. Help develop local drought contingency plans in areas of the state that have increased concern about wholesale water system delivery constraints.

B. Emergency Preparedness

1. Assist the water industry in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from extreme weather events and disasters, including earthquakes and wildfires, catastrophic accidents, and physical or cyber sabotage. These actions may include, but are not limited to, hazard mitigation and emergency response planning, funding, and post-emergency service restoration.
2. Assist the water industry in addressing the effects of public safety power shutoff events, power outages, and wildfires by facilitating procurement for emergency distributed power generation and working to remove regulatory barriers limiting the operation of emergency generators.
3. Support the Federal Emergency Management Agency programs to assist with hazard mitigation and emergency repairs and improvements, including but not limited to dam safety, spillway improvements, erosion control repairs, and wildfire preparedness and recovery efforts.

C. Physical and Cyber Security

1. Support continued U.S. Environmental Protection Agency oversight of water system security in coordination with other federal and state agencies with expertise in security, including the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and the Chemical Security Analysis Center.
2. Support enhanced physical security and cybersecurity and maintain best technological practices for water and power infrastructure, including protections against artificial intelligence threats.
3. Support development of standard guidance and best management practices for physical and cybersecurity to protect water and power critical infrastructure.
4. Ensure Metropolitan's ability to reliably operate and maintain its facilities, infrastructure, and real property assets, including rights of way, and to protect against encroachment and threats from unmanned aviation vehicles.

D. Chemical Security

1. Improve supply chain reliability, achieve tax-exempt status for water treatment chemicals, and ensure consistent access to water treatment chemicals.
2. Ensure the continued use of gaseous chlorine to protect public health.