

156th meeting of The Lyncean Group of San Diego

Date: Tuesday, 6 October 2026

Location: Southwestern Yacht Club, 2702 Qualtrough Street, San Diego, CA 92106

Speaker: Mr. Jeremy Crutchfield, P.E.,
Water Resources Manager,
San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)



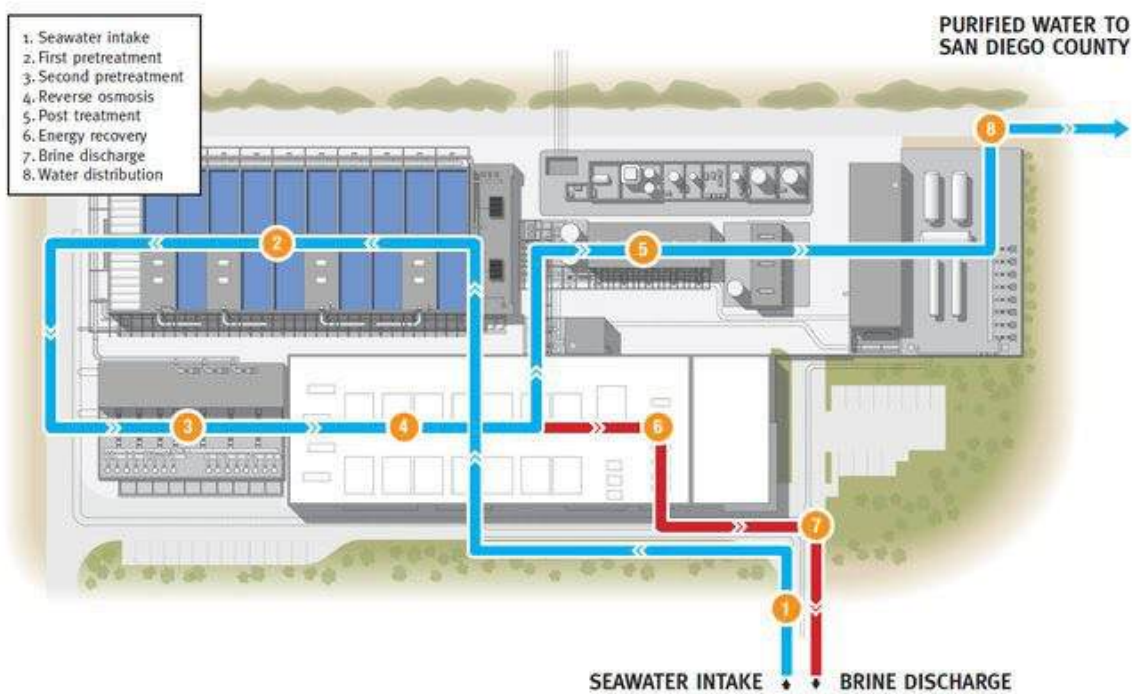
Jeremy Crutchfield

Title: The Role of Seawater Desalination for Water Supply Reliability in the San Diego Region and Entire Southwest

Abstract: In late 2015, the San Diego County Water Authority began receiving water from the Claude “Bud” Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant. The new drought-resilient supply couldn’t have come at a better time as the entire southwest was entrenched in a multi-year drought with mandated imported water cutbacks and supply allocations imposed by the state and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, respectively. The Carlsbad Desal Plant and other water supply diversification strategies implemented by the Water Authority and its member agencies over the last 20+ years have resulted in the San Diego region securing a reliable supply of water now and into the future that can withstand drought and other water supply threats related to climate change, regulatory actions, and environmental pressures. This presentation will provide a look into what drove the Water Authority to develop the Carlsbad Desalination Plant, why a Public-Private-Partnership was chosen as the delivery mechanism, and how the plant turns seawater into high-quality drinking water. It will also cover how the Water Authority is marketing its resilient supply to other water agencies in the Southwest and the possible role of seawater desalination in addressing dire conditions on the Colorado River.



The Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant in Carlsbad, CA. Source: IDE Technologies



*Desalination process diagram for the Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant.
Source: SDCWA*

You'll find more information on the Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant on the San Diego County Water Authority website here: <https://www.sdcwa.org/your-water/local-water-supplies/seawater-desalination/>

Speaker biography: Jeremy Crutchfield earned his Civil Engineering degree from the University of Arizona and a master's degree from Loyola Marymount University. He is a licensed civil engineer with more than twenty-five years of experience planning, designing and constructing water infrastructure projects. As a Water Resources Manager at the San Diego County Water Authority, he oversees the facility and supply planning functions as well as administration of the Carlsbad Desalination Plant Water Purchase Agreement.

There was a large group in attendance for Jeremy's presentation, "Seawater Desalination and Water Market for the Southwest," which you can download [here](#).





Jeremy explained that, from 1991 to the present, SDCWA has diversified San Diego's water supply through the addition of saltwater desalination, conservation, recycling and water transfer agreements that give SDCWA greater operating flexibility to meet demand and limit water price increases.

SDCWA established an intrastate exchange with Riverside County, Burbank and Imperial County to add flexibility in distributing Colorado River water received from the Metropolitan Water District. Partnerships with state and federal authorities on the lower Colorado River basin have led to the creation of an interstate exchange mechanism that further improves SDCWA's operating flexibility, even as dry conditions persist in the Colorado River basin.



Pete Lobner presents Jeremy Crutchfield with a Lyncean coin.

After the meeting adjourned, Jeremy Crutchfield kindly stayed to continue conversations with several interested Lyncean members.

Pete Lobner's meeting slides are available [here](#).