

BUSINESS NEWS

New Los Angeles Water Plan Includes Recycling

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Last week, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa unveiled a new water plan for the city that could cost up to \$2 billion over 20 years and help the city meet a projected 15% increase in water demand by 2030.

Conservation initiatives as well as wastewater recycling are central to meeting the increased demand under the new plan.

In the 1990s, the city constructed a system to recycle wastewater for drinking, but it was abandoned, due to opposition, which dubbed it "toilet to tap."

David Nahai, the city's director of water and power said such criticism is misguided.

"We have new technology," he said. "There is nothing to fear. We should not be deterred by demagoguery or ignorance. We should not allow ourselves to fall prey to catchy, facile phrases," he said.

The plan calls for a 600% increase in recycled water use. If the City Council approves it, Los Angeles would join other cities taking the approach, including Orange County', which opened \$481 million plant in January.

Mayor Villaraigosa, once opposed the idea of recycled drinking water as well, but has changed his position.

"For over 250 years, through dry and wet seasons, we've grown from 44 settlers to 4 million people and every time we needed water, our approach was the same--we pitched another straw in the ground, we marched up to the mountains, to the aqueducts in distant areas and opened up our wallets," Villaraigosa said.

Villaraigosa said rates will not change as a result of the plan, which will be paid for through existing grants and budget allowances.