

# WATER QUALITY REPORT

DELIVERED JUNE 2024 (Based on 2023 data)



# A LETTER FROM OUR GENERAL MANAGER



## ***Building a Legacy of Water Quality and Care***

This year, I was honored to accept the position of General Manager at Desert Water Agency. Mark Krause, who served as the most recent GM, and his predecessors, left a legacy of outstanding dedication – to our community, the environment and our water resources.

With nearly three decades of service to DWA and our customers under my belt, I am proud to continue the tradition of delivering safe and reliable water.

Our team members are the key to a secure and sustainable water supply. At DWA, we work hard to ensure that when you turn on the tap, water is there. We also strive to make sure future generations have the same privilege.

While California experienced a couple of wet weather years, we must continue to be diligent and prepared if statewide drought conditions return. Water efficiency remains as critical as ever, and we need your help to make conservation a California way of life. You can get water-saving tips and incentive information at [www.dwa.org/save](http://www.dwa.org/save).

Conservation is only one part of DWA's mission. We are also devoted to providing a safe supply. Our state-certified lab tests more than

2,500 samples of water a year to ensure its quality. California has some of the strictest standards in the country – and I am pleased to report that our water consistently remains safe to drink.

Information for the 2023 calendar year is available in the following Water Quality Report, along with other important details such as commonly asked questions and water sample data results.

Please feel free to reach out to us at 760-323-4971 with any questions. You can also learn more about DWA and our water supplies at [www.dwa.org](http://www.dwa.org).

**STEVE L. JOHNSON**  
General Manager & Chief Engineer



# OUR WATER SUPPLY

## DESERT WATER AGENCY

Established in 1961, Desert Water Agency (DWA) is a public nonprofit agency and State Water Contractor managing water in a 325-square-mile area that includes parts of Cathedral City, Palm Springs, and Desert Hot Springs, as well as some unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The Agency's responsibility is to provide safe, reliable water to its retail customers while managing water resources throughout its boundary. DWA is guided by an elected board of five community members. Board members make policy decisions as public representatives.

## WATER SOURCES

DWA's groundwater comes from the Indio Subbasin of the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin, a natural reservoir storing water beneath the valley floor. Most of the water DWA delivers to customers comes from groundwater. DWA also utilizes mountain streams which bring water by way of Chino Creek, Falls Creek, Snow Creek and the Whitewater River. A new surface water filtration plant came online in late 2020 to filter Snow Creek and Falls Creek surface water which is used for Snow Creek Village; unfiltered surface water produces hydroelectric power and helps replenish groundwater. Chino Creek, serving the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, operates in accordance with filtration avoidance criteria.

Natural groundwater replenishment is supplemented with Colorado River water, imported via the Colorado River Aqueduct and infiltrated into the groundwater basin through recharge ponds near Windy Point.

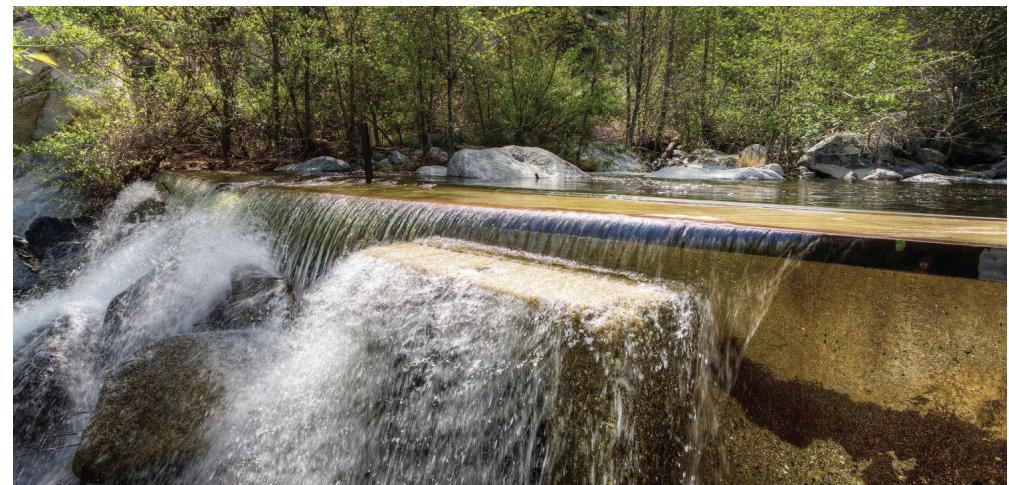
## WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report was obtained between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023. Water quality monitoring was performed in accordance with regulations established by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Division of Drinking Water and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In some cases, the SWRCB allows DWA to test for certain contaminants less than once a year, because the Agency's system is not susceptible to these contaminants, or because the levels recorded are expected to change little from year to year.

# WATER SOURCE INFORMATION

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.



## SOURCE WATER ASSESSMENT

- Source Water Assessment Plans (SWAPs), last updated in 2022, for various sources, are available at our office. This plan is an assessment of the delineated area around our listed sources through which contaminants, if present, could migrate and reach our source water. It also includes an inventory of potential sources of contamination within the delineated area and a determination of the water supply's susceptibility to contamination by the identified potential sources.
- These sources are considered vulnerable to activities normally associated with residential, commercial and industrial development. However, all water provided by Desert Water Agency meets all U.S. EPA and SWRCB guidelines. To review the SWAPs, please contact our office during regular business hours.

Questions? For more information about this report, or for any questions relating to your drinking water, please call Paul Monroy, Laboratory Director, at **(760) 323-4971**.

# GLOSSARY

**Action Level (AL):** The level at which the system must undertake a number of additional actions to control corrosion.

**Aggressive Index:** A calculation used to determine the corrosivity of water in our pipes. Numbers  $\leq 10$  are considered very aggressive, between 10-12 are moderately aggressive and  $\geq 12$  are non-aggressive.

**Locational Running Annual Average (LRAA):** The average of sample analytical results for samples taken during the previous four calendar quarters.

**Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. Primary MCLs are set as close to the (PHGs or MCLGs) as is economically and technologically feasible. Secondary MCLs are set to protect the odor, taste, and appearance of drinking water.

**Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLG's are set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

**Microsiemens Per Centimeter ( $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ):** A measurement of the electrolytes in the water, which determines the ability of the water to conduct electrical current.

**Micrograms Per Liter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ ):** A measure of a contaminant in a known quantity of water.  $1 \mu\text{g}/\text{L}$  equals 1 part per billion (see parts per billion).

**Milligrams Per Liter ( $\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ):** A measure of a contaminant in a known quantity of water.  $1 \text{ mg}/\text{L}$  equals 1 part per million (see parts per million).

**NA:** Not applicable.

**Nanograms per Liter ( $\text{ng}/\text{L}$ ):** A measurement of a contaminant in a known quantity of water.  $1 \text{ ng}/\text{L}$  equals 1 part per trillion. (see parts per trillion).

**ND:** Not detected or below the reporting detection limit.

**Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU):** A measure of cloudiness due to undissolved solids in the water. We measure turbidity because it is a good indication of the effectiveness of our filtration system and/or water quality.

**Notification Level (NL):** Health-based advisory levels established by the state for chemicals in drinking water that lack maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). When chemicals are found at concentrations greater than their notification levels, certain requirements and recommendations apply.

# SAMPLING RESULTS

During the past year we have taken more than 2,550 water samples in order to determine the presence of any radioactive, biological, inorganic, volatile organic, or synthetic organic contaminants. **The tables below show those contaminants that were detected in the water.** The state allows us to monitor for certain substances less often than once per year because the concentrations of these substances do not change frequently. Some of our data, although representative, are more than one year old. In these cases, the most recent sample data are included, along with the year in which the sample was taken.

Substance	Unit of Measure	MCL (MRDL)	PHG (MCLG) [MRDLG]	Groundwater Source			Surface Water Source			Violation		Likely source of contamination
				Year Sampled	Amount Detected	Range (Low-High)	Year Sampled	Amount Detected	Range (Low-High)	Yes	No	
Chlorine	mg/L	[4.0 as Cl <sub>2</sub> ]	[4 as Cl <sub>2</sub> ]	2023	0.59	0-2.2	2023 <sup>1</sup>	1.8 <sup>2</sup>	0.54-8.2	x		Drinking water disinfectant added to treatment
Fluoride	mg/L	2.0	1	2021-2023	0.4 <sup>3</sup>	ND-0.60	2023	ND	ND		x	Erosion of natural deposits: discharge from fertilizer and aluminum factories
Gross Alpha Particle Activity	pCi/L	15	0	2017-2023	8	ND-22 <sup>4</sup>	2019 - 2023	5.3	3.8 - 6.7		x	Erosion of natural deposits
Haloacetic Acids (HAA5) <sup>5</sup>	ug/L	60	NONE	2023	ND	ND	2023	26 <sup>6</sup>	ND-41		x	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Nitrate (as N)	mg/L	10	10	2023	0.91	ND-2.7	2023	ND	ND		x	Runoff/leaching from fertilizer use; leaching from septic tanks and sewage; erosion of natural deposits
Tetrachloroethylene (PCE)	ug/L	5	0.06	2021-2023	ND	ND-0.66 <sup>7</sup>	2016	ND	ND		x	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits
Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) <sup>5</sup>	ug/L	80	NONE	2023	8.4 <sup>6</sup>	ND-12	2023	52 <sup>6</sup>	5.1-61		x	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Turbidity	NTU	5	NONE	2021-2023	<0.1	ND-0.27	2023	0.31	0.22-0.40		x	Soil runoff
Surface Water Turbidity <sup>8</sup>	NTU	TT=1	NONE	NA	NA	NA	2023	0.36	ND-0.36		x	Soil runoff
Surface Water Turbidity <sup>9</sup>	NTU	TT= 95% of samples $\leq 0.2$ NTU	NONE	NA	NA	NA	2023	98.9%	98.9-100%		x	Soil runoff
Uranium	pCi/L	20	0.43	2017-2023	6.0	2.8-17	2019	4.9	4.9		x	Erosion of natural deposits

Tap water samples were collected for lead and copper analysis from sample sites throughout the community.

Substance	Unit of Measure	AL	PHG	Distribution System			Number of Schools Sampled	School samples above AL/Total Samples	Violation		Likely source of contamination
				Year Sampled	Amount Detected (90th Percentile)	Sites Above AL/Total Samples			Yes	No	
Copper	mg/L	1.3	0.3	2021	0.22	0/30	NA	NA		x	Internal corrosion of household/business water plumbing systems; discharges from industrial manufacturers; erosion of natural deposits
Lead	ug/L	15	0.2	2021	ND	2 <sup>10</sup> /30	0	0		x	Internal corrosion of household/business water plumbing systems; discharges from industrial manufacturers; erosion of natural deposits

Substance	MCL		MCLG	Highest % positive samples in any month	Total # of routine positive samples	Total # of repeat positive samples	Violation		Likely source of contamination	
							Yes	No		
Total Coliform Bacteria (State Total Coliform Rule)	5.0% of monthly samples are positive			0	0.0%	0	0		x	Naturally present in the environment
Fecal Coliform and <i>E. coli</i> (State Total Coliform Rule)	See Footnote 11			0	0	0	0		x	Human and animal fecal waste
<i>E. coli</i> (Federal Revised Total Coliform Rule)	See Footnote 12			0	0	0	0		x	Human and animal fecal waste

**Parts Per Billion (PPB):** One part per billion corresponds to one minute in 2,000 years or one penny in \$10,000,000 (ten million dollars).

**Parts Per Million (PPM):** One part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or one penny in \$10,000 (ten thousand dollars).

**pH:** An expression of the intensity of the basic or acid condition of a liquid. The pH may range from 0 to 14, where 0 is most acidic, 14 most basic and 7 neutral.

**PicoCuries per Liter (pCi/L):** A measure of the radioactivity in the water.

**Primary Drinking Water Standard (PDWS):** MCLs, MRDLs and treatment techniques (TTs) for contaminants that affect health, along with their monitoring and reporting requirements.

**Public Health Goal (PHG):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. PHGs are set by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

**Regulatory Action Level (AL):** The concentration of a contaminant, which if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements, such as public notification, that a water system must follow.

**Treatment Technique (TT):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

**UCMR:** Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule

**Variances and Exemptions:** SWRCB permission to exceed an MCL or not comply with a treatment technique under certain conditions.

< Means "less than": For example <0.2 means the lowest detectable levels is 0.2 and that the contaminant was less than 0.2 and therefore not detected.

1. In January 2023, DWA had low chlorine disinfectant levels out of the Snow Creek Filtration Plant serving Snow Creek Village. Inadequately treated water may contain disease-causing organisms that can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches. The Agency quickly took corrective action and has installed additional treatment processes. All system samples taken during that time showed the water met all other state/federal standards.

2. The water source for testing is the filtration plant instead of surface water.

3. DWA does not add fluoride to drinking water.

4. Certain minerals are radioactive and may emit a form of radiation known as alpha radiation. Some people who drink water containing alpha emitters in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

5. These numbers are not the average annual amount.

6. Highest LRAA for 2023.

7. Of 22 wellheads in the system, 21 tested nondetect.

8. Turbidity is regulated as a TT for filtration avoidance and filtration treatment. TT=1 is a requirement for both filtration avoidance and filtration treatment. TT=95% of samples ≤ 0.2 NTU is for filtration treatment only.

9. Surface water provided by Snow Creek Filtration Plant.

10. Levels found in rarely used customer faucet, but not in primary fixtures or DWA distribution line.

11. If a routine and repeat sample are total coliform-positive and either is E. coli positive, or system fails to take repeat samples following E. coli-positive routine sample or a system fails to analyze total coliform positive repeat sample for E. coli, then a violation occurs.

12. If a routine sample is E. Coli positive and a repeat sample is total coliform positive, then a violation has occurred.

13. Approved regulatory limits will be reflected in 2024 data.

SECONDARY SUBSTANCES	Substance	Unit of Measure	MCL (MRDL)	PHG (MCLG) [MRDLG]	Groundwater Source			Surface Water Source			Violation		Likely source of contamination
					Year Sampled	Amount Detected	Range (Low-High)	Year Sampled	Amount Detected	Range (Low-High)	Yes	No	
	Chloride	mg/L	500	NONE	2021-2023	49	13-92	2023	2.3	1.2-3.4	x		Runoff/leaching from natural deposits; seawater influence
	Color	Units	15	NONE	2021-2023	ND	ND	2023	ND	ND	x		Naturally occurring organic materials
	Odor-Threshold	TON	3	NONE	2021-2023	1	1	2023	1	1	x		Naturally occurring organic materials
	Specific Conductance	uS/cm	1600	NONE	2021-2023	590	280-930	2023	210	100-320	x		Substance that form ions when in water; seawater influence
	Sulfate	mg/L	500	45	2021-2023	120	29-230	2023	7.5	1.2-14	x		Runoff/leaching from natural deposits; industrial wastes
	Total Dissolved Solids	mg/L	1000	NONE	2021-2023	390	180-600	2023	130	65-190	x		Runoff/leaching from natural deposits
OTHER SUBSTANCES	Aggressive Index	AI	Non-aggressive	NONE	2021-2023	12.4	11.8-12.5	2023	11.6	11-12.1	x		Influenced by hydrogen, carbon, oxygen and temperature
	Alkalinity	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	140	110-170	2023	110	56-160	x		Function of carbonate, hydroxide and bicarbonate; naturally occurring
	Bicarbonate	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	140	110-170	2023	110	56-160	x		Naturally occurring
	Barium	mg/L	1	2	2021-2023	0.043	ND-0.10	2023	0.048	0.039-0.056	x		Naturally occurring
	Calcium	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	72	30-100	2023	28	12-44	x		Contributes to water hardness; naturally occurring
	Hexavalent Chromium <sup>13</sup>	ug/L	NONE	NONE	2013-2018	1.3	ND-3.9	NA	NA	NA	x		Discharge from steel and pulp mills and chrome plating; erosion of natural deposits
	Hardness	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	230	88-320	2023	82	33-130	x		Naturally occurring
	Iron	ug/L	300	NONE	2021-2023	ND	ND-75	2023	130	ND-130	x		Leaching from natural deposits; industrial wastes
	Magnesium	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	13	3.4-20	2023	3.0	1.0-4.5	x		Contributes to water hardness; naturally occurring
	pH	pH Unit	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	8	7.8-8.1	2023	7.8	7.7-7.9	x		Naturally occurring
	Sodium	mg/L	NONE	NONE	2021-2023	39	22-77	2023	10	7.9-12	x		Naturally occurring

Effective April 1, 2016, all water systems are required to comply with the state Total Coliform Rule and the federal Revised Total Coliform Rule. The new federal rule maintains the purpose to protect public health by ensuring the integrity of the drinking water distribution system and monitoring for the presence of microbials (total coliform and *E. coli* bacteria). U.S. EPA anticipates greater public health protection as the new rule requires water systems vulnerable to microbial contamination to identify and fix problems. Water systems that exceed a specified frequency of total coliform occurrences are required to do an assessment to determine if any sanitary defects exist. If found, the water system must take corrective action.

## HEALTH INFORMATION



Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. Desert Water Agency is responsible for providing high-quality drinking water but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components on your property. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).

## PFAS & CHROMIUM-6: WHAT TO KNOW



Our priority at Desert Water Agency is to provide clean and safe water.

California has the most stringent water standards in the nation. DWA performs lab tests for potential contaminants like per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). In April 2024, the U.S. EPA announced a new national maximum contaminant level (MCL) for PFAS. In addition, the California Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment adopted a more stringent public health goal for these same substances.

DWA conducted a targeted analysis of its water wells and PFAS was not found at levels exceeding the maximum contaminant level in our retail service area. DWA is in compliance with all regulations and will complete additional testing as required. Learn more at [www.dwa.org/pfas](http://www.dwa.org/pfas).

Also this year, the California State Water Resources Control Board approved the country's first drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium (chromium-6). Chromium-6 is a naturally occurring metal that can appear in water as natural erosion from the environment or as discharge from industrial processes.

DWA has not detected chromium-6 in its water distribution system above the state's maximum contamination level of 10 parts per billion. Chromium-6 has appeared in water at higher levels in other parts of the Coachella Valley (due to natural environmental erosion), but not in DWA's retail service area. You can learn more by reading frequently asked questions at [www.dwa.org/chromium6](http://www.dwa.org/chromium6).

# COMMON WATER QUALITY QUESTIONS

## WHY DOES TAP WATER SOMETIMES SMELL FUNNY?

When your water tastes or smells funny, the problem may or may not be in the water. Often times odors might actually be coming from your sink drain, where bacteria grow on hair, soap, food, and other things that get trapped. This produces odorous gasses that get stirred up when water pours into the drain. Similar smells can also come from bacteria growing on devices such as water heaters.

A slight smell or taste of chlorine in your water is also normal. A small amount of chlorine is required, and added to water in order to meet drinking water regulations. Chlorine is a disinfectant used to provide continuous protection against any possible microbial contamination. Regulations limit the amount of chlorine added to tap water, so that the water is safe to drink.

When sulfate is present in the water supply, a sulfur or rotten egg smell may develop. Improperly maintained water heaters or lack of water circulation within a residence during warmer months are circumstances that may contribute to this odor.

## WHY DOES MY WATER LOOK CLOUDY?

Occasionally, tiny air bubbles in tap water cause a cloudy appearance. Air dissolves into water when pressurized, which occurs in the groundwater basin and in the water pipes that deliver water to your tap. These bubbles dissipate after a few moments in a glass.



## IS FLUORIDE ADDED TO THE WATER?

Desert Water Agency does not add fluoride to its water. It does occur naturally here. Fluoride levels are regulated, and California currently has a maximum contamination level (MCL) of 2.0 ppm for drinking water. In comparison, our average fluoride level of 0.4 ppm is 5 times below the MCL required by the state.



# REGULATORY INFORMATION

## CONTAMINANTS THAT MAY BE PRESENT IN SOURCE WATER INCLUDE:

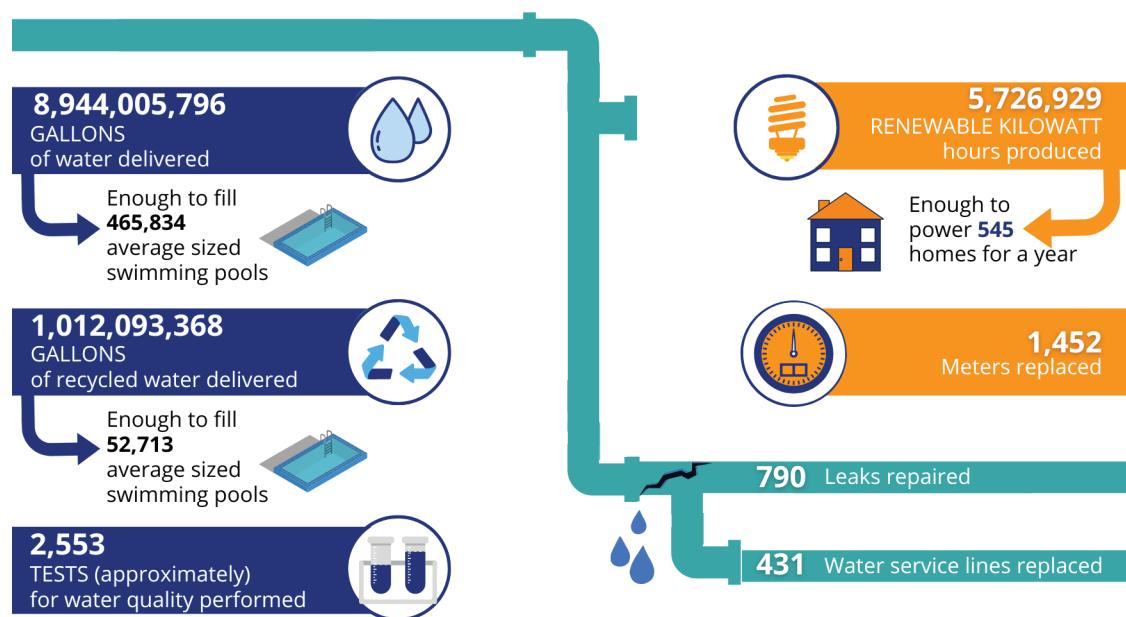
- **Microbial contaminants**, such as viruses and bacteria, that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.
- **Inorganic contaminants**, such as salts and metals, that can be naturally occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.
- **Pesticides and herbicides**, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses.
- **Organic chemical contaminants**, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, that are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, agricultural application, and septic systems.
- **Radioactive contaminants**, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.



In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) prescribe regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations and California law also establish limits for contaminants in bottled water that provide the same protection for public health.

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained through the U.S. EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

# DESERT WATER AGENCY 2023 YEAR AT A GLANCE



## YOUR WATER QUALITY

Desert Water Agency is committed to serving healthy, safe drinking water and to keeping you informed about the quality of the water that is delivered to your tap. Our team samples water daily to ensure it meets strict standards. As fluctuating conditions in California continue to affect water supply, it is important for us to support our customers and work together to protect this precious local resource.

By explaining the sources of our water and defining the exact constituents in the water, this report is our way of providing clear, transparent information to our customers. The Board and staff take their responsibility to provide high-quality water very seriously and we're proud to report that our water continues to be safe. You can drink and use tap water without worry. If you have questions about this report, please contact Paul Monroy, Laboratory Director, at (760) 323-4971.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 8 a.m.

**PAUL ORTEGA**  
President  
Division 4

**JEFF BOWMAN**  
Vice President  
Division 3

**GERALD McKENNA**  
Secretary - Treasurer  
Division 2

**STEVE GRASHA**  
Director  
Division 1

**KRISTIN BLOOMER**  
Director  
Division 5



1200 S. Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs, CA 92264 | (760) 323-4971  
[www.dwa.org](http://www.dwa.org)



Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable. Tradúzcalo o hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.  
Para alguna pregunta o inquietud, llame al 760-323-4971.