

California's Water Projects

Like California's precipitation, the state's population is unevenly distributed. The majority of Californians live in the more arid, southern part of the state. Thus, freshwater demand is greater in southern California. To meet freshwater needs throughout the state, California has an intricate network of water storage and distribution systems, or water projects. Local, state, or federal agencies operate the state's water projects, some of which are shown in Figure 12.

Local Water Projects California's major local water projects consist of long aqueducts that carry water from its sources to where it is needed. As Figure 13 shows, an **aqueduct** is a pipe or channel through which water flows from a higher elevation to a lower elevation. In southern California, local water projects include the Los Angeles River and Colorado River aqueducts. The Los Angeles Aqueduct carries water 359 km from the Owens River east of the Sierra Nevada. The aqueduct has provided greater Los Angeles with water since 1913.

The Colorado River Aqueduct provides fresh water for cities, counties, and agricultural areas in southern California. The aqueduct helps to supply the Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas. It also irrigates the Imperial Valley. Demand for water from the Colorado River has increased steadily. Today, California must share more of the river's water with fast-growing cities in Nevada and Arizona.

Figure 12 California's Water Projects The complex network of canals, aqueducts, and reservoirs in California produces a statewide water distribution system that is an engineering marvel.

