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MWD aims to turn sewage into beverage

Water recycling plant would be among the world's largest.

BY MATT STEVENS AND MONTE MORIN

For more than 80 years, the Metropolitan Water District has paved the way for Southern California's epic growth by securing water from hundreds of miles away.

This week, the mammoth agency said it wants to invest closer to home in what would be one of the world's largest plants to recycle sewage into drinking water.

The plan would thrust Los Angeles County to the forefront of a small but growing number of areas embracing "toilet to tap" technology to meet the water needs of their residents. It comes after four years of drought that have sparked questions about the long-term reliability of some water supplies.

For the MWD, its expanded involvement in water recycling is also a powerful statement that Southern California cannot count on imported water alone to serve a growing population. "This is the new reality of

water in California," said Mark Gold, associate vice chancellor for environment and sustainability at UCLA. "If anything, this drought has demonstrated that you'd better have a diversified water portfolio or you're not going to survive very well."

Now, 58% of L.A. County's water is imported, while 38% comes from groundwater sources, according to a UCLA study. Only 4% comes from recycling, and high processing costs have until recently limited its appeal to water providers.

The agency would partner with Los Angeles County sanitation districts to create the facility.

In a committee meeting Monday, MWD staff presented the framework of a plan to purify and reuse as much as 168,000 acre-feet of water a year — enough to serve about twice that number of households for a year.

Doing so would require the MWD to build a treatment plant and delivery facilities and comply with environmental regulations — a process that could take more than a decade.

Officials did not specify a projected cost, but similar endeavors elsewhere have [See Water, A12]



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

A HOMELESS MAN sleeps on a bridge in downtown Los Angeles. Homelessness has surged in the city in recent years, and officials have acknowledged failure to stem it. "This is all simply words," says one critic.

L.A. leaders to declare homeless emergency

The plan would devote up to \$100 million to the issue

By Peter Jamison, David Zahniser and Matt Hamilton

Acknowledging their failure to stem a surge in homelessness, Los Angeles' elected leaders on Tuesday said they would declare a "state of emergency" and devote up to \$100 million to the problem. But they offered few details about where the money would come from or how it would be spent, leaving some to question the effort's chances of success.

The announcement by seven City Council members and Mayor Eric Garcetti was a powerful signal of growing alarm at City Hall over L.A.'s homeless population, which has risen 12% since 2013, the year Garcetti took office. It coincided with a directive from the mayor Monday evening that the city free up an additional \$13 million in the coming months to help house people living on the streets.

Some lawmakers assert that their proposed declaration — which the council must still vote to approve — would allow the city to ease restrictions on churches and nonprofit groups sheltering the home-

Life on the streets of L.A.

Growing: In both the city and county of Los Angeles, the homeless population has jumped 12% in the last two years.

Shelters: The number of tents, makeshift encampments and vehicles occupied by homeless people soared 85%, to 9,535, according to biennial figures from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Countywide: More than 44,000 homeless people were tallied in January, up from more than 39,000 in 2013, the report said. Well over half — nearly 26,000 — were in the city of Los Angeles.

less and speed up the permitting process for builders of affordable housing. They pointed to a state law that allows the city to declare a "shelter crisis" and use public facilities such as parks or schools as emergency housing.

"It's time to get real, because this is literally a matter of life and death," said Councilman Mike Bonin, whose Westside district is home to many of the makeshift sidewalk encampments that are an increasingly glaring symbol of the problem across the city. He spoke of a "collective failure of every level of government to deal with what has been a homeless crisis for generations and is exploding and exacerbating now."

Despite such tough talk, however, Tuesday's announcement was marked by signs of the confused tactics critics say have hindered an effective city response to a growing challenge. Council members haven't identified the sources for all of the money or how it would be used. Meanwhile, the mayor has yet to release a sweeping plan — now weeks overdue — he says he is crafting to end homelessness. [See Homeless, A12]

In a heartbeat, VW suffers big hits to its value, integrity

BY CHARLES FLEMING

The expanding Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal now includes 11 million vehicles worldwide and has severely damaged the giant automaker's credibility and market value.

The company's stock tanked again Tuesday as the automaker announced that it would set aside \$7.3 billion for recalls and "other efforts to win back the trust of our customers." Its shares have lost a third of their value since Friday and more than half since April.

Volkswagen's admitted cheating on U.S. emissions tests marks only the latest scandal to envelop a giant automaker, complete with a criminal investigation, civil lawsuits and the threat of enormous fines. But VW's problems differ in striking ways from the safety investigations into General Motors Co., for defective ignition switches, and Toyota Motor Corp., over unintended acceleration.

Though no one was injured or killed by its actions, Volkswagen may suffer even more financial damage — its regulatory fines could total up to \$18 billion, or \$37,500 per diesel car sold in the U.S. Compare that to fines of \$900 million for GM and \$1.2 billion for Toyota, both negotiated through settlements. More to the point, VW's

Volkswagen stock plummets

The carmaker's stock on the Frankfurt exchange has lost about a third of its value since Friday and more than half since a peak in April.

Volkswagen share price (Dec. '14 to Sept. '15)



Source: FactSet Research Systems Inc. Los Angeles Times

alleged crimes appear premeditated and carefully plotted rather than resulting from negligence, incompetence or bureaucracy. The company lied to regulators for more than a year before admitting the deception.

At a New York promotional event Monday night, Volkswagen's U.S. chief executive, Michael Horn, offered no excuse for the automaker's conduct.

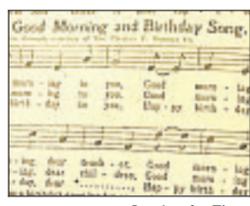
"We have totally screwed up," Horn told attendees at [See VW, A4]

Hillary Clinton joins foes of Keystone XL

The Democratic presidential candidate wades into the debate over the pipeline, declaring that she will stand with activists seeking to block it. **NATION, A6**

Weather
Afternoon sun.
L.A. Basin: 86/69. **B8**

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Go ahead, sing 'Happy Birthday'

The complex saga of the six-note ditty, which has spanned more than 120 years, takes an unexpected turn when a federal judge in Los Angeles rules the original 1935 copyright is not for the song itself. **CALIFORNIA, B1**



OLIVIER DOULIERY Pool Photo

TOP-LEVEL WELCOME

President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama and schoolchildren greet Pope Francis upon his arrival in the U.S. Obama and Francis have many issues in common that they hope to advance during the pope's visit. **NATION, A14**

A PAPAL AUDIENCE

Pope Francis' visit to the East Coast has become the hottest ticket in California

BY ESMERALDA BERMUDEZ

Ofelia Neri knows a thing or two about getting time with the pope.

In 2002 the East Los Angeles resident got to see Pope John Paul II in Mexico City, and in 2005 she flew to Rome for a Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI.

When she heard earlier this year that Pope Francis, her favorite pontiff, would visit the U.S. for the first time, she immediately began to hunt for tickets.

"Oh my God," Neri thought. "Who can I call? Who can I ask? I prayed and prayed that someone could help me."

She wasn't alone. Stubbers scrambling to see Taylor Swift could have learned something about devotion from the California Catholics who entered lotteries or wrote essays or simply rushed to the front of a line to score a ticket to see the pope.

Tickets for most events connected to the pope's visit were offered on the East Coast. But the church in Cal-

ifornia had an estimated 1,800 passes to Wednesday's Washington, D.C., Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, when the pontiff will canonize missionary Junipero Serra.

It parceled out the passes across the state's 10 dioceses and two archdioceses, leaving each bishop to decide who should receive them.

In Los Angeles and Stockton, it was first come, first served. In San Francisco and Orange County, big pilgrimages were organ- [See Pope, A14]

U.S. saw surge of Asian migrants last year

BY DON LEE

WASHINGTON — After almost a decade of languishing growth, the nation's immigrant population increased by more than 1 million last year amid stronger job creation in the U.S. and slowing economic activity in other parts of the world.

New government data show there were 42.4 million foreign-born people in the U.S. last year, or 13.3% of the country's total population. That's up 1.04 million from 2013, about double the annual growth in recent years.

The sharp increase in immigrants, most of whom came from Asia, contrasts with a small net decrease in immigrants in 2008 during the depths of the Great Recession. The surge has been felt especially in states such as California and Florida.

The upturn comes as illegal immigration becomes a highly contentious issue in the 2016 presidential campaign, with many conservatives in particular expressing concerns about the social and economic costs.

Paradoxically, ferment over illegal immigration rose in the last few years even as immigration numbers re- [See Immigration, A10]



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