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AB-580 Surface mining: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 580

CHAPTER 270

An act to amend and repeal Section 2715.6 of the Public Resources Code, relating to mining.

[Approved by Governor October 03, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 03, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 580, Wallis. Surface mining: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

(1) The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 prohibits a person, with exceptions, from conducting surface mining operations unless, among other things, a permit is obtained from, a specified reclamation plan is submitted to and approved by, and financial assurances for reclamation have been approved by, the lead agency for the operation of the surface mining operation. Existing law authorizes the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) to prepare a master reclamation plan, as provided, that identifies each individual surface mining operation in specified counties and satisfies all reclamation plan requirements for each individual surface mining site. Existing law requires the State Mining and Geology Board to act as the lead agency for surface mining operations conducted by the MWD and authorizes the board to conduct an inspection of an individual surface mining operation once every 2 calendar years during a period when that individual surface mining operation is idle or the site has no mineral production. Existing law requires the MWD to be the lead agency for any environmental review of the master reclamation plan. Existing law repeals the provisions authorizing the preparation and approval of the master reclamation plan for the MWD on January 1, 2026.

This bill would extend the operation of those provisions until January 1, 2041. To the extent this bill would require a local government acting as a lead agency for environmental review of the master reclamation plan to perform those additional duties for a longer period of time, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

(3) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 2715.6 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

2715.6. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Metropolitan Water District" means the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

(2) "Metropolitan Reclamation Plan" means a master reclamation plan that may be approved pursuant to this section for all surface mining operations conducted by the Metropolitan Water District within the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura. The master reclamation plan shall identify each individual surface mining operation and satisfy all reclamation plan requirements for each individual surface mining site.

(b) Unless otherwise provided in this section, the requirements of this chapter, Section 2207, and Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 3500) of Division 2 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations shall apply to surface mining operations conducted by the Metropolitan Water District within the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura.

(c) The board shall act as the lead agency pursuant to this chapter and Section 2207 for surface mining operations conducted by the Metropolitan Water District.

(d) In addition to any other requirements in statute or regulation, the Metropolitan Reclamation Plan shall include both of the following:

(1) A map that identifies the location of each individual surface mining operation conducted on lands Metropolitan Water District owns or leases, or upon which easements or rights-of-way have been granted to the Metropolitan Water District.

(2) Maintenance measures that become effective when any individual surface mining operation is idle or the site has no mineral production. Maintenance measures shall maintain the site in compliance with this chapter while the surface mining operation is idle or the site has no mineral production.

(e) The Metropolitan Reclamation Plan is exempt from the requirements of subdivision (h) of Section 2770, except that financial assurances required by Section 2773.1 shall remain in effect during any idle period.

(f) Notwithstanding subdivision (b) of Section 2774, the board may conduct an inspection of an individual surface mining operation once every two calendar years during a period when that individual surface mining operation is idle or the site has no mineral production.

(g) (1) In the annual report required pursuant to Section 2207, the Metropolitan Water District shall provide a separate subreport for each individual surface mining operation that provides the information and documentation required in that section.

(2) The Metropolitan Water District shall pay an annual reporting fee pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 2207.

(3) The board, in its role as the lead agency, may collect reasonable inspection costs pursuant to subdivision (f) of this section, and paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 2774 and, excluding Section 3696.5 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, may impose an administration fee pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 2207 in an amount not to exceed the board's reasonable costs in carrying out this chapter.

(h) Notwithstanding any other law, the Metropolitan Water District shall not be required to secure approval of a reclamation plan from any city or county or obtain a use permit from any city or county under this chapter to conduct the operations under the approved Metropolitan Reclamation Plan.

(i) The Metropolitan Water District shall not sell or allow any materials produced by its surface mining operations from lands it owns, leases, or upon which easements or rights-of-way have been granted to be sold or used for the benefit of any other person.

(j) For purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000)), the Metropolitan Water District shall be the lead agency for any environmental review of the Metropolitan Reclamation Plan.

(k) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2041, and as of that date is repealed.

SEC. 2. The Legislature finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because the service area of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California covers six counties, providing water to 26 member agencies that serve approximately 19,000,000 people across the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura; the district's Colorado River Aqueduct and other critical drinking water infrastructure are unique in that the district crosses multiple counties and it is essential to the district's mission to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way; it is necessary for the district to use stone, gravel, and sand to operate and maintain its critical infrastructure, including the use of materials to repair storm and flood damage, and repairs to the rights-of-way and appurtenant facilities necessary to ensure the safe operation of its critical drinking water infrastructure and, thus, ensure delivery of water to approximately 19,000,000 people in southern

California; the implementation of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 2710) of Division 2 of the Public Resources Code) by multiple counties as to the district may lead to the conflicting application of the law to a single special district; and the implementation of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 by the district with the oversight of the Department of Conservation will ensure more uniform and efficient application of the law.

SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because a local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.