

Severe droughts are forcing researchers to rethink how technology can increase the supply of fresh water.

Even in drought-stricken California, San Diego stands out. It gets less rain than parched Los Angeles or Fresno. The region has less groundwater than many other parts of the state. And more than 80 percent of water for homes and businesses is imported from sources that are increasingly stressed. The Colorado River is so overtaxed that it rarely reaches the sea; water originating in the Sacramento River delta, more than 400 miles north, was rationed by state officials this year, cutting off some farmers in California's Central Valley from their main source of irrigation. San Diego County, hot, dry, and increasingly populous, offers a preview of where much of the world is headed. So too does a recent decision by the county government: it is building the largest seawater desalination plant in the Western Hemisphere, at a cost of \$1 billion.

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