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## Securing Much-Needed Access to the Colorado River

Client: San Diego County Water Authority



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"This is a momentous victory for California, and especially for our economy and quality of life in San Diego County. The Colorado River Quantification Settlement Agreement and its cornerstone water transfer agreements mean long-term water security for our region's \$188 billion economy and the quality of life of 3.1 million residents."  
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Thomas V. Wornham, Chair San Diego Water Authority Board of Directors

The historic Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) gave California the means to implement major Colorado River water transfers that allowed the state to live within its 4.4 million acre-foot basic annual apportionment of water. However, since the agreement was made in 2003, it has faced numerous legal challenges.

After more than a decade of litigation, a Sacramento Superior Court judge validated the QSA and 11 related agreements and rejected all of the remaining legal challenges to the landmark accord. The ruling secured a key component of water supply for Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck's client, the San Diego County Water Authority, which will receive highly reliable water as a result.

This decision settles longstanding disputes among California water agencies that obtain water from the Colorado River. Beyond California, it provides a framework for securing peace between California and the other Lower Basin states (Arizona and Nevada) and the Upper Basin states (Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico). Also important, the QSA lessens California's overdependence on the river by providing for the conservation and transfer of Colorado River water within California and for other supply programs designed to bring California within its annual apportionment.

For the last 15 years, Brownstein's Natural Resources Department has played an integral role in both the QSA negotiations and litigation. Tapping extensive knowledge and experience with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), our team led defense of the litigation challenging the QSA and prepared briefs on key contests and cutting-edge issues, which resulted in the decision validating the 2003 QSA.

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### Meet The Team

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