

Potable Water Supply for Region II, 1987

Summary:

Potable water is supplied to the cities of Antofagasta, Mejillones, Calama, and Tocopilla as well as the towns of Pampa Salitrera (Region II) through a system administered and operated by the National Sanitation Services Agency (SENDOS).

Some characteristics of this system make supplying potable water a costly endeavor. These aspects include the considerable distance from the water intake in the Loa River basin to final consumers and the water's high arsenic content.

Considering the high level of investment that would be required to increase the supply of potable water in Region II, the National Planning Office asked CIAPEP to analyze the long-term situation for a 20-year time horizon.

The proposed aim was to achieve a socially optimal water supply in that timeframe. The study's main conclusions indicated that the most socially profitable project would involve optimizing the allocation of the 1,442 l/s supply available in 1989, applying pricing at marginal cost with investments to expand the limited capacity in the Calama-Tocopilla-Pampa Salitrera subsystem.

The assessment also found that it would not be socially optimal to make investments to increase supply within the assessment period. It recommended reassessing the project to increase water supply around the year 2000, as rapid technological advances should translate into reduced costs for investment in and production of potable water in the zone.