

# ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

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CONTACTS:

OCWD: Gina Ayala, (714) 378-3323, [gayala@ocwd.com](mailto:gayala@ocwd.com)

USACE: Greg Fuderer, (213) 479-8698, [gregory.a.fuderer@usace.army.mil](mailto:gregory.a.fuderer@usace.army.mil)

## **OCWD WORKS WITH U.S. ARMY CORPS TO MAXIMIZE RECENT RAIN AND COMBAT DROUGHT**

**FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif.** (Dec. 23, 2014) — It hasn't rained much the last three years in arid Orange County, but when it does the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (The Corps) work cooperatively to capture stormwater to enhance our local water supply. On Tuesday, December 16, The Corps approved a temporary change in the operation of Prado Dam in anticipation of a pending rainstorm. This change allows the Corps to temporarily increase the amount of water that can be captured behind Prado Dam. The storm generated enough runoff to fill the Prado Reservoir to its standard flood season elevation of 498 feet, plus an additional 0.6 feet above that. This allowed for conservation of this additional water, which could have been lost to the ocean. The Corps and OCWD are working to increase water conservation storage for the remainder of the winter without impacting environmental habitat, downstream construction or flood risk management. In total, the December rains brought approximately 10,000 acre-feet to Prado Dam, enough water for 20,000 households annually. Although the two agencies are working together to capture runoff from the recent rains, the reality is it will take multiple years of above-average rainfall to recover from the current drought conditions.

Since the beginning of July 2014, the start of the water year, OCWD has received 5.42 inches of rainfall at its recharge facilities in Anaheim. The typical average is 4.38 inches from July through December. Again, although this is a step in the right direction, the facts remain the same. California is facing a serious drought and we must take actions and implement solutions that increase our water supplies and utilize every drop as efficiently as possible.

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OCWD will continue to capture stormwater, when possible, and use it to recharge the groundwater basin it manages. The basin is a valuable regional asset that provides more than 70 percent of the water for north and central Orange County, over 2.4 million people. In addition to stormwater, the District primarily uses recycled water, Santa Ana River water and imported water to replenish the groundwater basin.

“OCWD analyzes all available water resources to keep its portfolio diverse and maximize every drop,” said District President Cathy Green. “Increasing stormwater capture and water reuse are two of our primary goals and we appreciate the tremendous efforts of The Corps in helping us provide water reliability to the region,” she added.

Efforts to capture more stormwater are occurring throughout the state as the potential of this resource comes to light. Currently, the District and The Corps are working on the Prado Feasibility Study, a plan to restore ecosystems in Prado Basin and permanently increase the amount of runoff that can be stored behind Prado Dam from October through February. This would bring the year-round elevation to 505 feet, which can potentially provide an additional 30,000 af of water annually, enough for 60,000 households. Until the Study is complete and the recommended alternative is implemented, The Corps is seeking to implement a planned deviation to allow for the temporary capture of stormwater up to elevation 505 feet during the flood season from October through February. This would serve as a buffer until the Study is finalized.

“The primary purpose of Prado Dam is flood risk management; however, since the 1960s we have worked jointly with the District to include water conservation,” said Kim Gilbert, a hydraulic engineer with the Reservoir Regulation Section for Corps’ Los Angeles District. “We support increasing water reliability, and in response to the drought, we have worked to implement temporary deviations to allow for increased storage of water behind the dam, and we are working toward securing a planned deviation to current operations until a successful outcome of the Prado Feasibility Study can be achieved.”

OCWD takes great measures to prepare for and respond to drought conditions and to implement a long-term plan, which includes maximizing the capture of stormwater, to ensure water reliability for the region. To work towards obtaining state-wide water sustainability, California must continue to analyze policies, plans and goals that integrate stormwater management.

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For more information about the District, please visit [www.ocwd.com](http://www.ocwd.com). To learn more about The Corps, go to [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil).

### **About OCWD**

*OCWD is committed to enhancing Orange County's groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities utilize the groundwater basin managed by OCWD: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster and Yorba Linda.*

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