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SOUND PLANNING AND INVESTMENT HELP OCWD KEEP LOCAL GROUNDWATER PUMPING STEADY EVEN DURING TIME OF DROUGHT

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (May 5, 2015) —Sound planning and investment drive the Orange County Water District's (OCWD; the District) efforts to prepare for and respond to drought conditions. As California faces a fourth year of drought, OCWD continues to provide a steady supply of groundwater to north and central Orange County and, in June, will bring 30 million gallons of new water a day (MGD) to the region when the initial expansion of its Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) is put into operation. The project's timing is critical as it supports a total production capacity of 100 MGD—enough water for 850,000 people annually.

Since 1933, the Orange County Water District has made significant investments in water infrastructure projects and groundwater management to support its mission to provide reliable, adequate, high-quality water to local water retailers at the lowest reasonable cost in an environmentally responsible manner. Executing this mission requires sound management and protection of one of the County's most valuable assets—the Orange County Groundwater Basin. The Basin provides 19 local water retailers, serving 2.4 million people, with 72 percent of their water supply. The groundwater they pump is about one-third of the cost of imported water, so successful management of this resource is critical to the region.

GWRS water is a primary source of replenishment for the Basin. As other sources of replenishment decrease, the GWRS continues to grow. This is a principal reason why OCWD's Board of Directors have supported permitting the 19 water retailers it serves to pump the majority of their water supply from the Basin. Annually, the Board establishes a production percentage (BPP) and a replenishment assessment (RA). The BPP is the amount of water cities and water districts can pump from the basin as a percentage of their total water demands and the RA is what they pay the District to pump it.

The OCWD Board of Directors recently approved a 70 percent BPP, effective July 1, 2015. The District is proud to provide 70 percent of the 19 water retailers' water supply from the groundwater basin. This translates into a cost savings for water retailers and end-users, as the amount of costly imported water that must be purchased decreases. The 70 percent BPP that will soon take effect is two percent lower than the previous year because of drought conditions, but the reality is that the GWRS has consistently helped the District maintain a high basin production percentage.

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“Without the GWRS we would not be able to support a high BPP,” said OCWD President Cathy Green. “That’s why we continue to invest in expanding this project, which has helped the region better weather the drought by producing a locally-controlled supply of high-quality water. At a time when water is scarce and cuts are being implemented, this type of project spurs optimism that resources exist such as, treated wastewater, which can be reused for the communities’ benefit. In Southern California alone, 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater is lost to the ocean every day,” she added.

Prior to the GWRS coming online, the BPP was 62 percent. Since it came online in 2008, OCWD has saved its retail customers from purchasing approximately 418,000 acre-feet of imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River that would have cost more than \$315 million.

“During the 2008 drought, we brought the GWRS online, and here we are facing another drought and we’re ready to put a 30-MGD expansion of this project into operation,” said OCWD General Manager Mike Markus. We couldn’t have planned it better and we never stop exploring ways to bring new water to the region. In fact, we’re currently exploring the feasibility of a 130-MGD final expansion of the GWRS, we’re exploring ocean desalination and we’re committed to maximizing stormwater capture. It’s our job to bring water reliability to the region and we will continue to exercise our due diligence,” he added.

The GWRS is a water reuse project that purifies treated sewer water using a three-step advanced process consisting of microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. To learn more about the project, please visit www.gwrsystem.com.

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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