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The Orange County Sanitation District and Orange County Water District Respond to Grand Jury Report: “Increasing Water Recycling: A Win-Win for Orange County”

Fountain Valley, Calif. (July 27, 2015) - Recently, the Orange County Grand Jury released a report titled “Increasing Water Recycling: A Win-Win for Orange County.” The report recommended that the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD) and the Orange County Water District (OCWD) conduct a study to increase the amount of wastewater sent to OCWD for the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS). The two agencies have partnered on water recycling projects for more than 40 years increasing water reliability in the region.

The 1970s marked the start of the agencies’ water recycling effort with the launch of Water Factory 21, a first-of-its-kind water treatment facility that recycled treated wastewater and injected it into the ground to form a seawater intrusion barrier to protect Orange County’s Groundwater Basin. OCWD continued to operate and expand this important project for decades until it was eventually replaced with the Groundwater Replenishment System.

Hailed as a global model for water recycling, the GWRS purifies treated sewer water using a three-step advanced process that includes microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. The project came online in 2008 and was expanded last month to produce 100 million gallons of high-quality water per day (MGD), enough water for 850,000 residents annually. The GWRS water protects the basin from saltwater intrusion, increases local drinking water supplies, decreases the region’s dependence on imported water, and reduces the amount of treated wastewater sent to the ocean.

“The Orange County Sanitation District and the Orange County Water District are proud of their ongoing partnership that has brought revolutionary projects to the region” stated John Nielsen, OCSD Chair. “A safe and reliable water supply is fundamental to the ongoing success of Orange County and its economic sustainability. The GWRS allows us to send less water to the ocean and brings us one step closer to our goal of 100 percent recycling,” he added.

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“We appreciate the grand jury’s focus on the region’s water supplies and its support of water recycling,” stated OCWD President Cathy Green. “Our districts have engaged in years of sound planning that have resulted in the implementation of award-winning water recycling projects. And, we have made significant investments to make this happen. In the GWRS alone, we’ve invested more than \$600 million and we will keep moving forward as we accomplish a joint-agency goal of recycling every drop of reclaimable water,” she added.

Many of the grand jury’s recommendations have already been set into motion by the two agencies. In June, OCWD completed an expansion of the GWRS, resulting in purifying 100 percent of the treated wastewater from OCSD’s Plant 1. Earlier this year, in April, the water and sanitation district boards also approved a \$2 million joint study to explore the possibility of using flows from OCSD’s Plant 2, which may require additional infrastructure and/or treatment. This study affirms the agencies’ commitment to increase water recycling, when feasible, and to maximize every drop of reclaimable water. The agencies are hoping the study’s findings will support a recommendation to implement a final expansion of the GWRS that would increase total water production to 130 MGD. The study, expected to be completed by summer 2016, is partially funded by a \$450,000 grant from the Bureau of Reclamation’s U.S. Water Smart program.

OCSD and OCWD are tapping into every possible drop of water, setting an example for other agencies around the globe. For more information about OCSD and OCWD, please visit www.ocsd.com and www.ocwd.com.

About OCSD

OCSD is a public agency that provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.5 million people in central and northwest Orange County. OCSD is a special district that is governed by a 25 member Board of Directors comprised of 20 cities, four special districts, and one representative from the Orange County Board of Supervisors. OCSD has two operating facilities that treat wastewater from residential, commercial and industrial sources.

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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