



ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Orange County Water and Sanitation Districts \$600 Million Investment in Water Reuse Project Continues to Pay Off

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (Feb. 25, 2016) — As California faces the fifth year of drought, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) adopted and extended a revised emergency regulation to ensure that urban water conservation continues in 2016. The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) commends this important effort and is proud to have been invited to participate in the state's workgroup, along with Irvine Ranch Water District and San Diego, to develop this regulation. The District advocated for increasing the sustainable water supply credit for agencies that have made investments in drought-resilient water supply projects. The credit also incentivizes the building of new projects that will help mitigate the severity of future droughts.

The SWRCB recognized that without water supplies from sustainable projects, like OCWD's Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), the current drought conditions would be more severe. It recommended a Drought Resilient Sources of Supply Credit to go toward potable reuse, sustainable water supplies, and desalination supplies when state conservation mandates are in place. This recommendation equates to a credit of up to eight percent to a retail water agency's reduction target, effectively adjusting its conservation saving.

"Time and time again the GWRS proves to be a tremendous investment for OCWD and our 19 member agencies who serve 2.4 million people in north and central Orange County," said OCWD President Cathy Green. "These 19 retail agencies will now have a lower conservation target because they use water from the GWRS. More than \$600 million was invested in this project that helps the region meet conservation goals, increases local water supplies and helps us better weather drought. We are grateful that the agencies we serve will get credit for their significant investment in this drought-proof project," she added.

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ADD 1-1-1

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The GWRS is the world's largest indirect potable reuse project. The water it produces is used as a primary source to replenish the Orange County Groundwater Basin managed by OCWD. It accounts for approximately one-third of the water that goes into the basin. Other sources include Santa Ana River water, imported water and stormwater. Since 1933, OCWD has managed the basin in a sustainable manner to ensure the region's water future and has more than doubled its annual output. This sound management enables OCWD's 19 member agencies to pump about 75 percent of their water supply from the basin. While other regions have been struggling with dwindling local supplies, the GWRS allowed Orange County cities to pump more local groundwater during this historic drought, resulting in millions of dollars in savings.

A joint project of OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD), the GWRS has been in operation since January 2008. The project takes highly treated wastewater and purifies it through a three-step process that includes microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide, resulting in near-distilled quality water. Originally it produced 70 million gallons a day (MGD) of highly purified water, and in 2015, the project was expanded to produce 100 MGD. Ultimate capacity for the GWRS is projected at 130 MGD after infrastructure is built to increase wastewater flows from OCSD to the GWRS.

For more than 80 years, the Orange County Water District has made significant investments in water infrastructure projects and sustainable management of the groundwater basin. It takes a village to gain support for and implement these investments that have brought increased water reliability to the region. Thanks to OCWD leadership and member agencies, rate payers, partners, elected officials, regulators, the public at-large and many more, the investments made have significantly benefitted Orange County and have established OCWD as a leader in water reuse and groundwater management.

The SWRCB's recent action was prompted by Governor Brown's directive, in November 2015, to the board to extend the emergency water conservation regulation should drought conditions persist through January 2016. It will take multiple years of above-average rainfall to recover from current drought conditions, but water and regulatory agencies are working together to diversify supplies and plan for the future. We are all in this together and we are all part of the solution.

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ADD 2-2-2

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OCWD looks forward to working with the state and its staff on any future drought-related regulations. To learn more about the revised emergency regulation passed by the SWRCB, please visit <http://bit.ly/23J9PTR>.

-30-

About OCWD

The District 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 and receive approximately 75 percent of their water supply from it: 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. For more information about the Orange County Water District and its board of directors, call (714) 378-3200 or visit www.ocwd.com.