



ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT BOARD INVESTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT TO BRING WATER RELIABILITY TO THE REGION DURING HISTORIC DROUGHT

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (September 23, 2016) — At Wednesday’s board meeting, the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) board of directors enthusiastically approved the first step toward making the world’s largest water reuse project even bigger. The Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), which earlier this week celebrated its 200-billion-gallon production milestone, is on its way to moving forward with a 30-million-gallon-a-day (MGD) Final Expansion. This would bring the project’s total water production to 130 MGD, enough water for 1 million people annually. It would also bring increased water reliability to Orange County and is the type of water infrastructure investment that must be implemented throughout California to make the state’s water supply more sustainable.

“The GWRS has been a major part of the District’s water supply portfolio since 2008 and our ongoing investment in it has continued to pay off,” said OCWD President Cathy Green. “This project has helped the region better weather drought and water supply challenges and provides high-quality water to refill the groundwater basin we manage. Other less reliable sources used to fill the basin include natural rainfall, stormwater, imported water, and Santa Ana River water. The 19 retail water producers we serve currently get 75 percent of their water supply from the basin. So, we are all very fortunate that GWRS water is the most reliable source we have and that we’re able to increase production. GWRS water currently satisfies 23 percent of the water demand for these agencies. I’m so proud of this project which serves as a global model for water sustainability and we will continue to explore all options that bring new water to the region,” she added.

The Final Expansion, estimated for completion in 2022, would produce enough water to fulfill another seven percent of the water demand. This means that the GWRS alone would account for sustaining 30 percent of the water demand for the agencies OCWD serves. This is a tremendous cost savings for them and increases their overall water reliability. To meet their full water demand, the 19 agencies must also purchase costly imported water, so the more water they get locally from the groundwater basin, the better. Imported water is more than twice the cost of local groundwater.

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A joint project of OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD), the original 70 MGD GWRS facility went online in January 2008. A 30 MGD Initial Expansion was put into operation in May 2015 bringing the GWRS to its current 100 MGD capacity. In April 2015, the two districts began formally exploring the feasibility of the GWRS Final Expansion, which would bring the facility to its 130 MGD ultimate capacity, when their boards approved \$2 million to study the possibility of using flows from OCSD's Plant 2. Currently, the GWRS uses 100 percent of the flows from OCSD Plant 1. Partially funded by a \$450,000 grant from the Bureau of Reclamation's U.S. Water Smart program, the study was completed this past summer and supported the recommendation to implement the Final Expansion. As a result of the study, OCSD implemented diversion projects to segregate flows from its Plant 2 that come from the Santa Ana River Interceptor (SARI) Line, which will not be included in the water sent to the GWRS.

OCSD Chair John Nielsen, Vice Chair Greg Seborn and General Manager Jim Herberg spoke in favor of the Final Expansion during the meeting. They expressed strong support of the project given the numerous benefits it provides to the region ranging from decreasing Orange County's dependence on imported water to decreasing the amount of discharge to the Pacific Ocean.

The OCWD board must approve additional items related to this project in order to fully authorize its implementation. These approvals will likely occur in October and November of this year. Next steps also include the District's pursuit of funding for the project, which includes Proposition 1 grant funding, bonds and State Revolving Fund loans that typically carry a low interest rate.

If fully approved, the project's design phase would be conducted from 2017 through mid-2018 and construction would start in 2019. The total capital cost for the Final Expansion is estimated at \$351 million, which includes the cost of all projects to produce and recharge GWRS water. The projected unit cost of the water will be significantly less than the cost of imported water.

The GWRS takes treated wastewater and purifies it through a three-step process consisting of microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. The end result is ultra-pure water that meets or exceeds state and federal drinking water standards.

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A portion of GWRS water is injected into a seawater barrier with the remainder being pumped to OCWD's recharge basins where it percolates into the Orange County Groundwater Basin and becomes a primary source of drinking water for 2.4 million people. To learn more about this water reliability project, please visit <http://www.ocwd.com/gwrs/>. To view the board agenda and presentation from Wednesday's meeting, please visit http://www.ocwd.com/media/4626/bod_2016-09-21.pdf

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.

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