



ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BIG “WIIN” FOR ORANGE COUNTY AS PRESIDENT SIGNS BILL THAT WILL PROVIDE RELIEF TO DROUGHT-STRICKEN CALIFORNIA

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (Dec. 19, 2016) — President Barack Obama recently signed the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act. This historic legislation, which included elements from the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), will authorize California drought relief, provide aid to address lead contaminated drinking water, and will provide over \$10 billion in flood control, navigation, beach re-nourishment, and environmental restoration projects. The WIIN Act will deliver critical support to Orange County Water District’s (OCWD; the District) efforts to safeguard the region’s limited water supplies and to develop sustainable and innovative solutions to mitigate the drought's impacts to north and central Orange County.

Part of the WIIN Act included an authorization that will allow OCWD to maintain its existing separation of cost and flexibility in the temporary capture of stormwater behind Prado Dam, located in Riverside. By allowing local agencies to pay separable additional costs related to water conservation at local dams, they can capture more water during storm events to supplement drinking water supplies. Capturing stormwater and putting it into the Orange County Groundwater Basin, managed by OCWD, is significantly less in cost than importing water supplies and results in millions of dollars in savings annually for the 19 retail agencies which purchase groundwater from the District.

OCWD worked closely with Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and House Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach), Ken Calvert (R-Corona), Ed Royce (R-Fullerton) and Mimi Walters (R-Irvine) to advance common sense solutions to respond to the droughts that were ultimately adopted as part of the final legislation. In particular, Congresswoman Mimi Walters, as a member of the Public Works and Transportation Committee, worked with OCWD to ensure that water conservation language was included in the House version of the legislation, as well as the final version.

The ability of local agencies to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to demonstrate innovative approaches was also realized with the inclusion of provisions to allow the

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USACE to implement a pilot program to demonstrate how to remove sediment behind dams. This program will create additional water storage capacity behind the Prado Dam.

In addition to increasing stormwater capture, OCWD was successful in calling on its Congressional delegation to support the reauthorization of the Desalination Act to ensure that all avenues for supplying fresh water are available to the region. OCWD’s determination to create a successful water bill resulted in many recommendations that were adopted as part of the final bill.

One of the biggest accomplishments included in WIIN is a renewed commitment to water recycling. “OCWD is pleased that Congress heeded calls, among them to revise the Title XVI program to allow for a truly competitive grants program that holds the promise of expediting the construction of sustainable water recycling projects,” stated Cathy Green, OCWD President. “The revision of this program could lead to more projects like OCWD’s Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), which now produces 100 million gallons of purified water every day, and was only made possible by the strong commitment of the federal government.”

OCWD also called on Congress to increase funds for California in the State Revolving Fund Program. In addition, the District clarified that it was supportive of a new Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan program, but not at the expense of the SRF program, which was instrumental to the District in completing projects like the GWRS.

President Green added, “With the passage of numerous water infrastructure improvements, OCWD is enthusiastic and hopeful that there will be many positive changes in store for California, as well as our nation. We are honored to have been a part of the process and very pleased to have secured impactful results for the region.”

ABOUT OCWD

OCWD manages the vast Orange County Groundwater Basin which provides 75% of the water demands of 2.4 million people in north and central Orange County. 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: 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, call (714) 378-3200 or visit www.ocwd.com.

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