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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT CONTINUES TO MAKE SOUND INVESTMENTS TO INCREASE LOCAL WATER SUPPLIES

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (July 20, 2017) - Fulfilling its commitment to provide water reliability for more than 2.4 million people in north and central Orange County, the Orange County Water District (OCWD; District) continues to make sound investments to refill the Orange County Groundwater Basin following several years of extreme drought in California. Stressing the importance of maintaining a diverse water supply portfolio, the OCWD board of directors (Board) voted July 19 to purchase up to an additional 100,000 acre-feet of imported water from the Municipal Water District of Orange County, the local representative of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET). This is enough water to meet the water demands of more than 800,000 people.

Following an extremely wet winter, MET found itself in a rare position of managing extraordinary water supplies from Northern California with some water at risk of being lost. This occurred even after MET satisfied the requested deliveries of member agencies and is planning to store historic amounts of water. To prevent water loss, MET gained approval from its board to move forward with entering into agreements with select member agencies who manage groundwater basins in Southern California.

“OCWD is extremely diligent in maximizing every possible drop of water,” said OCWD President Denis Bilodeau. “MET has water available and we need to purchase it to start refilling the basin, which is currently about 40 percent full. We are grateful that the MET board implemented this program to take advantage of the abundant supplies in Northern California, which helps us increase water supplies in our local groundwater basin,” he added.

Under the agreement, OCWD will pay for the water over a period of five years. The cost will be less than the current cost of MET imported water, which is just over $1,000 per acre-foot. OCWD staff structured the debt payments caused by the estimated $70 million water purchase to minimize the estimated future rate increase to its member agencies, referred to as groundwater producers.

“OCWD will negotiate this water purchase agreement in the most cost effective manner possible,” added Bilodeau. “Our goal is to increase local water supplies in the most economic method possible for our groundwater producers. Staff has met and discussed this agreement at length with the 19 groundwater producers we serve and they are all in agreement with this large purchase of water. It’s hard to put a price on water reliability and we all understand that we are investing in long-term sustainability for the region,” he added.

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OCWD’s continued investments in infrastructure and exceptional management of the groundwater basin have allowed Orange County to weather drought and water supply challenges better than other California regions.

For more information about the important water supply effort with MET, please visit https://www.ocwd.com/media/5692/bod_20170719.pdf to read OCWD’s Board agenda item 23 that contains a write-up and presentation about the cyclic storage agreement. To learn more about OCWD, go to www.ocwd.com.

About Orange County Water District (OCWD)

The Orange County Water District is committed to enhancing Orange County’s groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities rely on the groundwater basin, managed by OCWD, to provide 75 percent of their water demands: 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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