

*Directors*

PHILIP L. ANTHONY  
DENIS R. BILODEAU, P.E.  
SHAWN DEWANE  
CATHY GREEN  
DINA NGUYEN, ESQ.  
VICENTE SARMIENTO, ESQ.  
STEPHEN R. SHELDON  
JAMES VANDERBILT  
BRUCE WHITAKER  
ROGER C. YOH, P.E.



*Officers*

*President*  
DENIS R. BILODEAU, P.E.  
  
*First Vice President*  
PHILIP L. ANTHONY  
  
*Second Vice President*  
SHAWN DEWANE  
  
*General Manager*  
MICHAEL R. MARKUS, P.E., D.WRE

## ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

*Orange County's Groundwater Authority*

December 8, 2017

Dear Community Stakeholder,

The following is an update regarding the Orange County Water District's (OCWD; the District) groundwater cleanup efforts.

On Friday, December 8, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced Administrator Scott Pruitt's decision to list twenty-one polluted sites for immediate action under Superfund. The proposed list includes the North Basin Groundwater site located in Fullerton, Anaheim and Placentia. EPA's statement is available at <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-prioritizes-cleanup-orange-county-north-basin-groundwater>

This is a preliminary decision. Formal proposal for the National Priority List (NPL) entails an orderly process with opportunity for public review and comments. Listing North Basin on the NPL was endorsed by the State of California early this summer and would allow the cleanup of the site to proceed after many years of negotiations and legal proceedings with potentially responsible parties.

North Basin falls squarely within EPA's core function of enforcement and compliance with the nation's environmental laws. In addition, the innovative approach will provide for expedited protection of a critical groundwater resource, cooperation of EPA with local and state agencies, and should expedite engagement of potentially responsible parties regardless if formal enforcement action is ultimately taken. There is significant correlation with Superfund Task Force Recommendations, including the goals and actions designed to be dynamic, adaptable and accelerate cleanups.

OCWD will inform you if/when such a decision is made regarding NPL status. In the meantime, below is information regarding parallel actions taken by OCWD to address threats to the Orange County Groundwater Basin.

### **North Basin [Fullerton, Anaheim, and Placentia areas]**

- OCWD has been conducting a remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) under EPA oversight. OCWD field geologists and hired consultants are nearly finished with the first phase of drilling, with 10 of the planned 14 monitoring wells complete. Subsequent phases of drilling will include wells in La Palma Park and sites along the northern edge of the plume in order to fill data gaps that hinder the delineation of the width and depth of the pollution plume. These additional locations were requested by the EPA. The data offered by these recent wells so far confirms OCWD's site conceptual model developed

with previous studies carried out over the years. OCWD expects to complete the EPA directed remedial investigation by April 2018.

- Six extraction wells were drilled by OCWD several years ago. Up until recently, none of those wells were placed into service for the capture and control of plume spreading. The delay in well completion was the result of legal challenges including a CEQA lawsuit. After waiting a few years for a resolution of the legal challenge and considering the new directions set with the EPA, the OCWD Board of Directors took it upon themselves to direct staff to install and operate well EW-1, considered one of the most important of the original 6 wells due to its location upgradient of two drinking water wells. To expedite the completion of the well, OCWD engineers re-designed it to allow discharge of the contaminated water to the nearby sanitary sewer. Construction of the new pumping system was completed and the new well became fully operational in November.

The water discharged by the well is sent into a sanitary sewer that is tributary to the Orange County Sanitation District's (OCSD) Plant 1 where it is treated extensively and then sent to OCWD's Groundwater Replenishment System where the water undergoes a three-step advanced purification process. The purified water is then recharged into the groundwater basin for subsequent reuse.

- OCWD staff has been working with the Prop 1 grant administrators within the State Water Resources Control Board to secure partial funding of the RI/FS work at both the North and South Basin sites (planning grants) and for the construction of the pumping systems and piping for the North Basin EW-1 project (implementation grant). Grant funds cannot be used for long term operation of remediation systems. The District will be looking to potentially responsible parties to fund those operations either through collaboration, litigation or by order of the EPA.

### **South Basin [Irvine, Santa Ana, and Tustin areas]**

- OCWD is conducting a RI/FS to investigate and develop a remedy for a large groundwater contaminant plume and has entered into a cost reimbursement agreement with the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). This voluntary and primarily self-funded program is proceeding despite a lack of cooperative agreement from most of the potentially responsible parties. There are some notable exceptions where individual parties have settled with OCWD and/or are performing important RI/FS and remediation work.

The current scope of OCWD work includes the drilling of 21 monitoring wells in 6 clusters. These wells will fill data gaps in both the geologic characterization and in the distribution of contaminants underground. They will also allow for additional aquifer analysis and groundwater modelling. Most of the new wells have been drilled. The current schedule for completion of the RI/FS is April 2019.

If you have any questions regarding EPA's recent preliminary decision and/or other matters related to the cleanup, please do not hesitate to contact me at (714) 378-8229 or [whunt@ocwd.com](mailto:whunt@ocwd.com)

Sincerely,

Bill Hunt