



NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT RECEIVES GOVERNOR'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP AWARD

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (January 18, 2018) - The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) received the 2017 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award (GEELA) for environmental education, California's highest and most prestigious environmental honor. OCWD's entry was deemed "exceptional for its innovative spirit and value to California's environment and economy." Governor Brown recognized OCWD and other GEELA recipients at an award ceremony in Sacramento held on January 17 at the California Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Sacramento. Senator John Moorlach and Assemblymember Matthew Harper participated in the program honoring OCWD.

The GEELA recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made notable, voluntary contributions to conserving California's precious resources, protecting and enhancing our environment, building public-private partnerships and strengthening the state's economy.

"This year's GEELA recipients are demonstrating exceptional leadership in addressing some of our most significant environmental challenges," said California Secretary for Environmental Protection Matthew Rodriquez. "Whether it's fighting climate change, conserving our water supplies or reducing waste, they inspire us with their creative and collaborative approaches. Their success expands our view of what is possible. Collectively, they are proving that a healthy environment is inextricably linked with a vibrant economy."

"We thank Governor Brown and the GEELA committee for this award honoring OCWD's commitment to environmental education," said OCWD President Denis Bilodeau. "Our primary mission is to provide water reliability to more than 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County, but this cannot be done without public support. Moving important water policies and infrastructure projects forward requires the backing of an informed and engaged public that understands and appreciates how water works. Having the public's vested interest in sustaining water supplies for generations to come has been a key element to OCWD's successful implementation of groundwater management policies and the building of a water recycling project for drinking water purposes in Orange County," he added.

GEELA award recipients are chosen from five categories and one subcategory: climate change including the subcategory automobile dealer zero emission vehicle (ZEV) promotion; ecosystem and land use stewardship; environmental education, sustainable practices, communities or facilities; and waste reduction. Awards are presented for voluntary achievements that culminated in 2016. OCWD received the award for environmental education because of three major educational initiatives it embarked upon in 2016 that enhanced its already robust educational programs. These initiatives shared water education on a global scale.

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The first initiative was advancing education about water reuse. OCWD co-created the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS)--the world's largest water reuse project of its kind with the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD) and led efforts with WaterReuse California and OCSD to pass legislation that allows bottling of advanced purified water for educational purposes. OCWD uses this tool to illustrate benefits of recycling and gain support of GWRS-like projects in California and the U.S. to combat water shortages and detrimental climate change effects.

The second initiative was the opening of the District's visitor center called the H₂O Learning Center and the enhancement of its facility tours and speakers bureau program with multi-lingual brochures, a social media campaign and animated presentations. These enhancements help to better educate the public about the challenges of providing reliable water and their role in the solutions.

The third initiative inspires students of all ages to pursue water-related education and careers and to create innovative solutions. OCWD hosted its 20th Children's Water Education Festival, created a program that supports Next Generation Science Standards, and hosted the 10th OC Water Summit to stimulate industry stakeholders to creatively solve global water problems.

OCWD will continue its robust education program to teach stakeholders about water and to help move California forward. To learn more about its programs, please visit <https://www.ocwd.com/what-we-do/legislative-community-engagement/>.

About the GEELA

The annual Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award is administered by the California Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the California State Transportation Agency, the California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency, the California Government Operations Agency, the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and the California Health and Human Services Agency. For more information on GEELA and this year's award recipients, visit <https://calepa.ca.gov/awards/geela/>.

About 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. For more information about OCWD, please visit www.ocwd.com.