

**RESPONSES TO THE ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT  
WATER IN ORANGE COUNTY NEEDS “ONE VOICE”  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDINGS**

- F1 A singular water authority for Orange County's wholesale water supply likely would result in further opportunities at the local, State, and federal levels in legislation, policy making and receiving subsidies and grants.

**Orange County Water District agrees with the finding.**

**Operating with two wholesale water agencies creates unnecessary confusion and inefficiencies. County, State and Federal representatives are required to meet and coordinate with two different wholesale water agencies with different agendas, priorities, lobbyist and requests for state and federal funding. For example: MWDOC is currently asking our federal senators to work to obtain approximately \$2 million in money for a possible new \$3.0 million South Orange County Emergency Operations Center. OCWD is asking these same senators to direct their efforts and political capital to obtain \$30 to \$50 million to support the construction of new PFAS treatment systems costing \$280 million. Our federal representatives are left wondering whose request should take priority.**

- F2 The current fragmented water system structure and operations provides challenges as it relates to development of new interconnected infrastructure as well as maintenance of existing systems.

**Orange County Water District partially disagrees with the finding.**

**MWDOC does not own or operate any water infrastructure. Thus, consolidating the two agencies would do nothing to facilitate more interconnected infrastructure or improved maintenance. However, as it relates to the retail water systems in Orange County, a new consolidated agency could potentially streamline the development of new interconnected infrastructure.**

- F3 There is a great disparity between the North/Central and South Orange County water sources, management, and operations carried out by OCWD and MWDOC.

**Orange County Water District agrees with the finding.**

**North and Central Orange County overlies the groundwater basin and has access to MWD imported water supplies as well as less expensive more**

**reliable groundwater supplies. South Orange County has no access to the groundwater basin and can only receive MWD imported water.**

- F4 South Orange County has many smaller retail water districts that lack a formal centralized leadership. Notwithstanding this lack of structure, South Orange County retail water districts have displayed effective collaboration when dealing with one another.

**No response requested**

- F5 Orange County Water District is a recognized worldwide leader in groundwater resource management and reclamation. Its leadership, innovation, and expertise can be further utilized to serve all of Orange County in developing additional innovative and beneficial programs.

**Orange County Water District agrees with the finding.**

**OCWD has a global reputation for its expertise in water management and water reuse. OCWD is frequently requested to attend conferences and legislative workshops to describe its projects and programs. OCWD also has direct relationships with high level highly trained staff who are experts in their fields who could be available to develop programs and projects that benefit the entire County.**

- F6 Orange County currently does not have a countywide coordinated policy regarding water conservation, which results in difficulty when complying with any new State-mandated conservation regulations.

**Orange County Water District disagrees partially with the finding.**

**OCWD believes conservation activities in the County are fairly well coordinated. The Municipal Water District of Orange County has implemented and administered many conservation programs for cities and retail water districts within the County. Without the direct statutory authority, it can be relatively difficult to get all cities and retail water districts to exactly coordinate their conservation activities.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- RI By January 2023, Orange County wholesale water agencies should formally begin analysis and collaboration towards forming a single wholesale water authority or comparable agency to operate and represent wholesale water operations and interests of all imported and ground water supplies. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F6)

**The recommendation has been implemented by OCWD. A summary of OCWD actions to date include:**

- **Met with MWDOC directors to determine their support and/or concerns.**
- **In the process of holding workshops and board meetings to discuss this subject with other water agencies to ensure all possible issues with a consolidation are identified and addressed.**
- **Meeting with other interested water leaders in the County to determine their support and concerns for a consolidation. OCWD staff is analyzing this option.**
- **Reviewing how the District would work with the state legislature and LAFCO to consolidate OCWD and MWDOC.**

R2 Any future "One Voice" consolidated Orange County wholesale water authority should have Directors that examine and vote on issues considering the unique needs of all water districts. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F6)

- **The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future if a consolidated agency is created.**