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## ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT OPERATIONS MANAGER RECOGNIZED AS OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

**FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif.** (November 13, 2023) – The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) proudly announces that Derrick Mansell, operations manager for the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), was named Outstanding Large Plant Operator of the Year by the Southwest Membrane Operator Association (SWMOA). This accolade is a testament to Derrick’s dedication to excellence and underscores OCWD’s pioneering work in water reuse.

“Derrick’s unwavering commitment, leadership, and exceptional skills as an operator have made a significant difference in our operations,” said OCWD Executive Director of Operations Mehul Patel. “This award is not only a recognition of Derrick’s professional excellence but that of our entire water production staff and also a reflection of OCWD’s leadership and innovation in the water industry.”

For more than 15 years, Derrick has played a pivotal role in advancing operations of the GWRS. His expertise in membrane technology has been instrumental in maintaining high water quality standards and ensuring compliance with all state and federal regulations.

“Congratulations to Derrick for this truly deserving honor and thank you to SWMOA for recognizing the efforts of both Derrick and the GWRS in advancing water reuse,” added Cathy Green, OCWD board president. “Awards like these reinforce the District’s role in developing sustainable and technologically advanced water solutions.”

The GWRS, also named the 2023 Large Plant of the Year by SWMOA, is the world’s largest water recycling facility. It takes highly treated wastewater that would have previously been discharged into the Pacific Ocean and purifies it using a three-step advanced treatment process consisting of microfiltration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. In early 2023, the facility completed a significant expansion that increased water production to 130 million gallons of high-quality water a day, enough to serve nearly one million people. This expansion also recycles 100% of OC San’s reclaimable wastewater flows, maximizing water reuse in the region.

Alongside Derrick stands a team of 61 GWRS personnel who support this award-winning project, including operators, maintenance technicians, injection wells system operators and instrumentation and electrical technicians. In 2022, the District developed its first-ever operations internship, offering emerging professionals the opportunity to work with experienced operators while gaining practical experience and training in the essential duties of a treatment plant operator.

To learn more about OCWD or the GWRS, visit [www.ocwd.com](http://www.ocwd.com).

*The Orange County Water District manages the local groundwater basin that provides 85% of the water supply for 19 cities and retail water districts in north and central Orange County, serving 2.5 million people. Guided by its commitment to sound*

*planning and investment, high standards for water reliability, exceptional water quality, environmental stewardship, sound financial management, and transparency, OCWD has proactively implemented initiatives to protect and increase local water supplies. OCWD replenishes the basin, prevents seawater intrusion, and protects Orange County's rights to Santa Ana River water. For more information about OCWD, please visit [www.ocwd.com](http://www.ocwd.com) and follow @OCWaterDistrict on social media.*

*The Southwest Membrane Operator Association (SWMOA) is an affiliate of the American Membrane Technology Association (AMTA) dedicated to the Southwest United States region. SWMOA's mission is to enhance the professional development of the membrane operator and the municipal and industrial applications they support. The SWMOA Operator of the Year Award is presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding performance and leadership in membrane processes and a willingness to further their knowledge. The SWMOA Plant of the Year Award recognizes facilities with a membrane-based treatment process that have exhibited an exemplary safety record and agencies that educate the public on water supply, water quality, treatment and/or reuse. Visit [www.swmoa.org](http://www.swmoa.org) for more information.*

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