



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **STATEMENT FROM ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT (OCWD; DISTRICT) GENERAL MANAGER MIKE MARKUS**

(The following statement is in response to a story published by Politico on the evening of May 7, 2018, entitled *Pruitt fast-tracked California cleanup after Hugh Hewitt brokered meeting*. The article is about the Orange County North Basin site that EPA is proposing to list on the National Priorities List.)

OCWD's dialogue with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) about the North Basin groundwater contamination goes back to 2014, during the Obama Administration.

In October 2016, OCWD and EPA entered into an administrative agreement under which the District committed to pay the cost of a remedial study under EPA oversight to assess the extent of the groundwater contamination in the North Basin and come up with possible interim solutions to contain and remediate the pollution.

Over the course of many years, District representatives have met with numerous regulatory staff and elected officials from both sides of the aisle to ensure ratepayers are not strapped with paying for the cleanup.

In August 2017, the state of California concurred with listing North Basin on the National Priorities List (AKA Superfund). The state of California has granted \$1 million of Prop 1 money to assist with development of the remedial study. This is a federal, state and local cooperative effort.

OCWD staff and attorneys met with Scott Pruitt in October 2017 and provided a briefing on the administrative agreement and progress of the remedial study, and the process to determine future interim steps to contain and remediate the pollution and protect the groundwater basin. The meeting was consistent with OCWD's responsibility to manage the basin and protect ratepayers, and EPA's oversight of federal involvement in this very significant water contamination problem affecting Orange County.

The meeting had been sought for months and was not fast-tracked. The North Basin groundwater issue has been ongoing for over a decade. The Orange County Groundwater Basin is a critical public resource and measures highly on EPA criteria and conforms to a number of Task Force recommendations being adopted by

EPA. Sharing this information as EPA staff is preparing to propose projects across the United States was timely and appropriate.

Who got the meeting is irrelevant. It was a legitimate meeting to discuss an issue that is a core function of EPA. Instead of focusing on Mr. Hewitt's opinion or his involvement in connecting OCWD with Mr. Pruitt, the focus should be on the fact that federal, state and local government agencies are working together to clean up pollution in a water-starved region and are trying to hold responsible parties accountable instead of passing the cost on to rate payers.

This is about making sure a community's drinking water is safe, the contamination does not spread and that the cost to make that happen is not the burden of innocent citizens.

For more information about North Basin, please refer to the resources listed below:

Myths & Facts About North Basin Groundwater:

[https://www.ocwd.com/media/6456/8-5x11-nb-cleanup-myths-and-facts\\_v15.pdf](https://www.ocwd.com/media/6456/8-5x11-nb-cleanup-myths-and-facts_v15.pdf)

OCWD North Basin:

<https://www.ocwd.com/what-we-do/water-quality/groundwater-cleanup/north-basin/>

EPA Orange County North Basin:

<https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0900251>

### ***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](http://www.ocwd.com).

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