



NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT PARTNERS ON HISTORIC WATER STORAGE PROGRAM

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (September 23, 2021) — The Orange County Water District (OCWD, the District) and regional water agencies worked together with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) to reach a historic agreement, the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP), to better prepare the region for future droughts and promote water use efficiency in Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties—an area serving millions of customers.

SARCCUP is a first-of-its-kind regional groundwater banking program between OCWD, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley), Western Municipal Water District (WMWD), and MWD. The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) helped distribute more than \$55 million of grant funding from California Proposition 84 to support the program. Five of the participating agencies—OCWD, EMWD, IEUA, Valley, and WMWD—are SAWPA member agencies.

“This is another win for Orange County ratepayers as we increase our water supply, enhance the environment and provide storage to assist with future droughts,” said OCWD Board President Steve Sheldon. “OCWD continues to be the national leader in groundwater management through this additional 36,000 acre-feet of storage along with grant funding for five new groundwater production wells that will increase the ability to extract stored water during drought periods.”

The \$150-million-SARCCUP program will provide a collaborative, watershed-scale approach toward groundwater basin management, replenishment, and water transfers. Under the agreement, SARCCUP will use up to 137,000 acre-feet of storage in six groundwater basins. The regional water agencies will collectively plan for droughts while also conducting habitat restoration and assisting with the development of regional water use efficiency programs. Removal of 640 acres of *Arundo donax*, a non-native plant that uses 3.75 additional acre-feet of water per year compared to native habitat plants, will be completed within five years, creating annual water savings of approximately 2,400 acre-feet of water—enough to serve more than 5,000 households annually.

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As part of this project, approximately \$500,000 from Proposition 84 funds will be used to support up to 10 retail water agencies in the watershed to create efficiency-based water budgets for some customers, and to provide landscape design assistance and an education program for residents to maintain their water efficient landscape.

“OCWD supports this collaborative effort because it increases the resiliency of our groundwater supplies against future droughts,” added Sheldon.

About Orange County Water District

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 77% 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, like @OCWaterDistrict on Facebook, follow @OCWDWaterNews on Twitter, follow @OCWD on Instagram, and follow Orange County Water District on LinkedIn.

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