



NEWS RELEASE

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OCWD PRESIDENT VICENTE SARMIENTO TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS ABOUT SAFE AND RELIABLE WATER IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (April 2, 2019) — Today, Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) President Vicente Sarmiento appeared in Washington D.C. to testify before the House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. President Sarmiento spoke about one of the most pressing issues—the provision of a safe and reliable water supply in the western United States.

As a leader in water recycling and groundwater management, OCWD was invited to discuss the projects and programs it has implemented that have helped the region to better weather drought and that have created a long-term reliable water supply for the 2.5 million people it serves in north and central Orange County.

OCWD's most notable accomplishment is its award-winning Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), the world's largest water purification project. A joint project of OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District, the GWRS has become a global model for water reliability. Seeing wastewater as a resource, the two agencies made history when they brought a 70-million-gallon-a-day (MGD) project online in 2008 and a 30-MGD expansion online in 2015. Today, the GWRS produces 100 MGD and a final expansion of the project will be implemented in 2023 that will bring total water production to 130 million gallons of water a day—enough water for one million people.

“The GWRS is a solution to water supply challenges, increasing water demands, local control, and long-term reliability,” said President Sarmiento. “There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to water recycling, but the GWRS is one of the most valuable assets in Orange County and it is a project that can be replicated locally, nationally and globally. The potential for water recycling is tremendous and when implemented, these projects will result in water security.”

Since, 1933 OCWD has managed and protected the Orange County Groundwater Basin, which provides water to 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. Nineteen cities and water districts water districts pump 77 percent of their water supply out of the groundwater basin. OCWD's proactive approach to planning and investment resulted in a groundwater basin that is protected against seawater intrusion and has doubled its annual yield since the 1960s.

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For decades, OCWD has worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to capture more stormwater behind Prado Dam to minimize the loss of stormwater to the ocean and maximize what is put into the groundwater basin. Additional efforts with the Corps include increasing water supply reliability and flood control management through advanced forecasting tools such as Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) that allows improved forecasts and new tools to be used by water managers for water operations. Increased forecast ability (longer lead time) will allow the Corps and OCWD to update operations at Prado Dam to improve water supply reliability in a changing climate, thereby reducing demands on imported water and saving energy.

“OCWD was truly honored to testify before the subcommittee and will continue to collaborate and share information in the interest of providing water reliability for all,” added President Sarmiento. “OCWD’s innovation, along with state and federal support, are the reasons why OCWD’s projects and programs are in place.”

As leaders in the water industry, OCWD is a supporter of legislation currently pending before the Subcommittee, H.R. 1162, that would reinvigorate the United States Bureau of Reclamation’s Title XVI water recycling program, authorizing \$500 million dollars in competitive grants assistance and, for the first time, increasing the ceiling on project assistance to \$30 million. The District requested that the subcommittee move to approve H.R. 1162 so that many more projects like the GWRS may be built.

The Orange County Water District appreciates the opportunity to testify before Congressional and state committees to share information, new research, best practices, and lessons learned.

About the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife

The Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife is part of the House Committee on Natural Resources and is responsible for overseeing the agencies that manage America’s water resources, hydropower development, and federal transmission lines. To view today’s full testimony, please visit <https://youtu.be/0RpK6SsrXGs>.

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 77 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, like @OCWaterDistrict on Facebook, follow @OCWDWaterNews on Twitter, and follow @OCWD on Instagram.

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