

CALIFORNIA

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WATER

IEUA

Innovates for a Sustainable Future

Eastern MWD

Provides Diverse Supply

Western Water

Leads Through Collaboration

SBVMWD

Shaping Sunrise Ranch Watershed

JCSD

Addresses Wildfire Risk



INSIDE:
An Exclusive Interview With California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth.

Cover Photo: Lake Elsinore, sustained and supported by 100% highly treated recycled water from Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD).



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Water Reality Check

If it feels like California's water conversation is getting more complicated and more urgent, you're not wrong.

As Karla Nemeth, Director of the California Department of Water Resources, shares in this issue, we are living with hard realities that are no longer theoretical. Precipitation is more volatile. Temperatures are higher. Snowpack is peaking earlier or barely forming at all. These aren't future scenarios to plan for someday. They're happening now, and they're challenging a water system built for a very different climate.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: California is on track to be short roughly 9 million acre-feet of water by 2040. And while conservation will always matter, we can't keep asking Californians to tighten the tap every time a drought shows up, especially when we know another one is coming.

So what do we do? We get serious about flexibility.

That means modernizing and stabilizing big systems like the State Water Project. It means smarter Delta conveyance that allows us to move water with fewer environmental disruptions. It means investing in storage, especially underground, where depleted aquifers can become an asset again. And it means having honest conversations about how large statewide projects and local resilience efforts work together, what they cost, and the value they provide.

Progress is happening. We have the data. We know the strategies, and they're not new. What we can't afford is delay or finger-pointing between agencies and regions. When that happens, ratepayers and communities pay the price.

California has always argued about water. But innovation, transparency, and collaboration can move us forward and help ensure every Californian has reliable access to clean, safe water in a climate that's anything but predictable.



Charley Wilson
Executive Director and CEO
Southern California Water Coalition



From left to right, Laura Hollender, Deputy Director for Flood Management and Dam Safety at the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), Karla Nemeth, Director of DWR, and Mark Pestrella, Director of Los Angeles County Public Works, looking at a map of the Eaton burn scar in January 2025.

Credit: Ken James / California DWR

State Water Leader Advocates Flexibility, Cooperation

DWR Director Karla Nemeth Outlines Water Challenges

By Elizabeth Smilor

California's water future in one word: "Innovative." California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth says state and regional leaders must innovate to secure a resilient water supply for all people and the environment for the next 100 years.

"If we do nothing, things will get worse and worse for Californians," Nemeth said in an extensive interview with Southern California Water Coalition (SCWC) Executive Director Charley Wilson. "Every time we have a drought, we can't just

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ask Californians to conserve. How do we save water for the drought we know is coming? The most affordable way is to optimize our existing system, then look at things to do to expand the system."

For the whole of Southern California, about 30% of water supply comes from Northern California via the State Water Project (SWP) and 20% from the Colorado River via the Colorado River Aqueduct. Both water delivery systems face hydrologic changes — decreased snowpack, earlier snowmelt and more intense storms — and aging infrastructure.

"One word solves two problems: flexibility," Nemeth said. "We need flexibility to respond to hydrologic volatility and we need flexibility to move water to where it's needed as it is needed. Our water infrastructure was built in a different era. Community needs have changed. We need to make our backbone water systems more flexible in the face of extreme weather and to meet the needs of people and nature."

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan), which has 26 member agencies serving 19 million people, created its Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water as a roadmap to "invest wisely, act decisively, and stay ahead of climate threats to every part of our supply," said General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh.

"It's not a choice between new infrastructure or smarter operations — we need both. We must reinvest in our existing infrastructure and protect our imported supplies, while also accelerating investments in conservation and storage, and advancing local, climate-resilient projects, like recycled water," he said. "At the same time, our teams are continuously innovating to push our water system to perform smarter and more strategically based on a range of conditions and the needs of our communities. We're moving water in ways we never have before, and building new flexibility into our system so that we can adapt to constantly evolving challenges."

Nemeth, Deshmukh and Inland Empire water managers agree that coupled with flexibility, cooperation throughout the state and region is imperative.

"In past dry years, there was a tendency for water agencies to 'protect your castle' — secure your own supply and not worry too much about what was happening around you," said Western Municipal Water District General Manager Craig Miller. "That may have worked in the moment, but it's not how we can operate anymore. The challenges we're facing today go well beyond any one dry year. What's changed is how we're responding. We're making decisions with a broader, regional and statewide perspective, focused on what's best for the system as a whole. We're partnering more, sharing resources, and coordinating across agencies in ways we didn't before."

Miller points to both Western Water's agreement with the San Diego County Water Authority and its involvement in state Senate Bill 72 as ways the district is working beyond their service area in western Riverside County. At the center of SB 72 is an interim statewide planning target of 9 million acre-feet by 2040, which is the amount of water supply California could lose as climate change reduces snowpack and intensifies drought. That target is roughly equal to two Shasta Reservoirs, or enough for 18 million homes, according to DWR. SB 72 guides supply, conservation, recharge, and storage strategies.

"Following the approval of SB 72 in 2025, agencies from all over California are joining together to plan for diverse and resilient water supplies for the future," said Heather Dyer, CEO/ General Manager of San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD). "As a member of the Advisory Committee for the California Water Plan update which will bring SB 72

to life, we are already beginning the hard work of reaching a target for new water supply that ensures there is abundant water for all the needs of California."

SBVMWD, a State Water Contractor providing supplemental water to the region, nurtures both regional and statewide partnerships. "The Santa Ana River Enhanced Recharge Project in the San Bernardino Valley is an example of a regional partnership that maximizes recharge of stormwater and State Water Project, when it's available," Dyer said. "At a statewide perspective, the Sites Reservoir and Delta Conveyance Project (DCP) are examples of large-scale infrastructure investments that will help to maximize the people's investment while minimizing the variability of imported water supplies."

"We need flexibility to respond to hydrologic volatility and we need flexibility to move water to where it's needed as it is needed. Our water infrastructure was built in a different era. Community needs have changed. We need to make our backbone water systems more flexible in the face of extreme weather and to meet the needs of people and nature."

Karla Nemeth
Director
Department of
Water Resources



Nemeth agrees that the most affordable solution is to optimize existing systems with the SWP at the center because it provides water for 27 million Californians. The DCP would divert water through a tunnel around the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta, rather than relying solely on pumps in the Delta that have to be turned down in large storm events to protect migrating salmon. However, along with infrastructure updates, innovative storage and recycling efforts are necessary. Sites Reservoir would create 1.5 million acre-feet of off-stream storage for dry years for communities, farms and protected wildlife areas. Regional recycled water projects in Los Angeles County, the Chino Basin and Orange County also play a vital role in water resilience.

/ See State Water, p 22 /



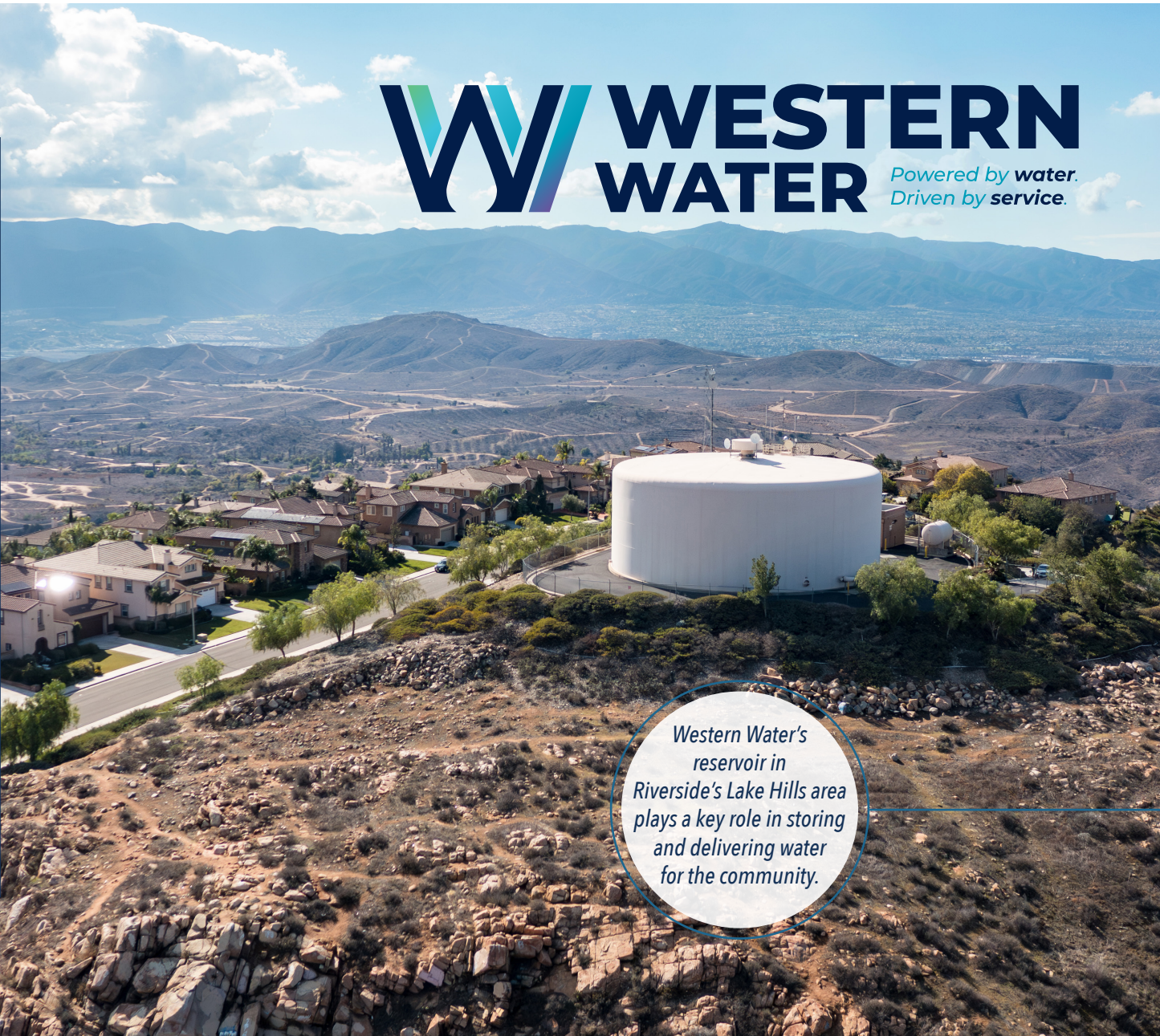
Nemeth, center, at April 1 Sierra snowpack survey.
Credit: Melissa Sanchez Robinson / California DWR



Meeting California's water challenges requires more than managing supply. It requires planning ahead, working together, and investing in solutions that last.

With increasing pressure from climate variability, aging infrastructure, and population growth, water agencies are rethinking how water is managed and shared across the state.

Western Municipal Water District (Western Water) is leading that effort through regional collaboration, strategic investment, and a focus on long-term reliability.



Western Water's reservoir in Riverside's Lake Hills area plays a key role in storing and delivering water for the community.

A New Model for Regional Collaboration

Western Water is advancing a more integrated approach to water management through a landmark agreement with the San Diego County Water Authority. This partnership demonstrates how agencies can work together to make better use of existing resources.

Through this agreement, Western Water will secure at least 10,000 acre-feet of water annually over the next 21 years, enough to supply approximately 30,000 Southern California households each year and strengthen long-term water reliability. The agency will also pre-purchase 30,000 acre-feet of water for future delivery, a nearly \$40 million investment that provides added flexibility during drought.

Rather than relying on new infrastructure, the agreement uses water sources and systems already in place in the region. This allows agencies to maximize what is available today while planning ahead for future needs.

This approach strengthens long-term reliability, reduces reliance on imported water, and provides additional flexibility during droughts. It also avoids the cost and timeline required to develop new supplies.

More importantly, it reflects a broader shift in California water management. Agencies are moving toward coordination and shared solutions rather than working independently.



San Diego County Water Authority's General Manager, Dan Denham and Western Water's General Manager, Craig Miller, shake hands during a landmark agreement between the two agencies.

Maximizing Investment Through External Funding

Western Water is focused on making every dollar work harder for the communities we serve.

That means actively pursuing state and federal funding to help deliver critical projects. To date, Western Water has secured more than \$70 million in grant funding. These funds help accelerate projects that improve efficiency, reduce water use, and strengthen system resiliency.

One example is the March Air Reserve Base Sewer Force Main Replacement project. With support from a \$13.1 million federal grant through the U.S. Department of War Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, Western Water is replacing nearly four miles of aging sewer pipeline that serves March Air Reserve Base and the surrounding communities.

This took multiple application cycles, years of coordination and strong partnerships at the federal level to bring this funding home.

Strengthening Regional Resilience Through SARCCUP

Western Water is one of a dozen key partners in the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP), a \$55 million, state-funded effort that brings multiple agencies together to improve how water is managed across the Santa Ana River watershed. By working together, agencies can capture more water during wet years and store it for use during dry periods.

SARCCUP reflects a more connected approach to water management, where regional systems work together to improve reliability for millions of people across Southern California.

Supporting Critical Statewide Infrastructure

Western Water's efforts extend beyond the region through active engagement in projects that are essential to California's long-term water reliability.

Projects like the Delta Conveyance Project and Sites Reservoir are designed to capture, move, and store water more effectively, especially during high-flow period, while supporting our environmental needs.

These investments will improve flexibility, increase storage, and strengthen drought resilience across California. For local agencies, they play a direct role in ensuring water supplies remain reliable for the communities and the environment they serve.

Helping Shape California's Water Future

Through Senate Bill 72, California is establishing long-term water supply targets as part of the California Water Plan.

Western Water General Manager Craig Miller's appointment to the 2028 California Water Plan's Advisory Committee ensures that the needs of Southern California communities are part of that conversation.

This work reflects a move away from reacting to challenges toward planning for long-term reliability.

Leading With a Comprehensive Approach

From regional partnerships and grant-funded projects to watershed coordination and statewide leadership, Western Water is taking a comprehensive approach to water management.

These efforts reflect a broader evolution in California water, moving from isolated systems to more connected networks, from short-term fixes to long-term planning, and from scarcity-driven decisions to a more balanced approach that includes building and managing supply.

As California continues to navigate a more complex water future, Western Water remains focused on delivering reliable, cost-effective, and forward-looking solutions for its communities while strengthening the state's water system. ○

Western Water breaks ground on key infrastructure upgrade serving March Air Reserve Base and the region.



Morning fog drapes over the Mokelumne River confluence in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, a critical hub in California's water system.



Photo Credit: California Department of Water Resources

Western Water General Manager Craig Miller at an SB 72 press conference, helping ensure Southern California's needs are reflected in statewide water planning.





SAWPA (Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority) is a Joint Powers Authority comprising five member agencies: Orange County Water District (OCWD), Western Municipal Water District (WMWD), Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD), and Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD). Formed in 1975, it was the first agency of its kind in California, establishing a model for how regional planning can advance shared water resource goals.

The origins of SAWPA trace back to decades of disputes over water rights, which culminated in the landmark 1969 Santa Ana River Settlement. In response, the Santa Ana Watershed Planning Agency (also known as SAWPA) was formed to coordinate planning efforts arising from the settlement. After developing regional multi-benefit project plans with local water suppliers, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority was established in 1975 to carry those plans forward.

SAWPA is located in Riverside, California, and focuses on a broad range of water resource issues, including water supply reliability, water quality improvement, recycled water, wastewater treatment, groundwater management, brine management, and integrated regional planning. SAWPA manages the Inland Empire Brine Line and develops and maintains regional plans, programs, and projects that will protect the Santa Ana River Basin's water resources to maximize beneficial uses within the watershed in an economically and environmentally responsible manner. To learn more, please visit sawpa.gov.

SAWPA Commission



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CHAIR
Western Municipal Water District



GIL J. BOTELLO
VICE CHAIR
San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District



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COMMISSIONER
Eastern Municipal Water District



JASMIN A. HALL
COMMISSIONER
Inland Empire Utilities Agency



DENIS BILODEAU
COMMISSIONER
Orange County Water District



Photos and videos from the event, along with the 50th Anniversary documentary video, commemorative eBook, audio interviews, and additional materials, are available at sawpa.gov/50years.

SAWPA Celebrates 50th Anniversary

On January 22, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) celebrated its 50th Anniversary at Crestmore Manor in Jurupa Valley, marking five decades of regional collaboration, innovation, and sustainable water management.

"SAWPA has achieved incredible milestones over the past 50 years," said SAWPA Commission Chair Mike Gardner. "Each decade has brought forward projects that have significantly benefited the region, making it difficult to highlight everything in just one night."

During the celebration, SAWPA premiered its 50th Anniversary video, featuring major accomplishments such as the Inland Empire Brine Line, the Arlington Desalter, the Western Riverside County Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (WRCRWA), the Rapid Infiltration and Extraction (RIX) facility, and many others.

Attendees also received a commemorative 50th Anniversary book, which provides an in-depth look at SAWPA's regional planning efforts, funding successes, and flagship projects.

Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan

What concerns you most? Take the 2-minute CARP (Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan) survey to contribute to planning for brighter days ahead.

Go to sawpa.gov/CARP

The goals of the CARP are to:

- Identify climate vulnerabilities and risks.
- Develop regional resilience projects in the Santa Ana River Watershed.
- Foster collaboration and engagement among stakeholders.
- Incorporate local perspectives from communities throughout the watershed.
- Build climate resilience capacity; and enhance water reliability.

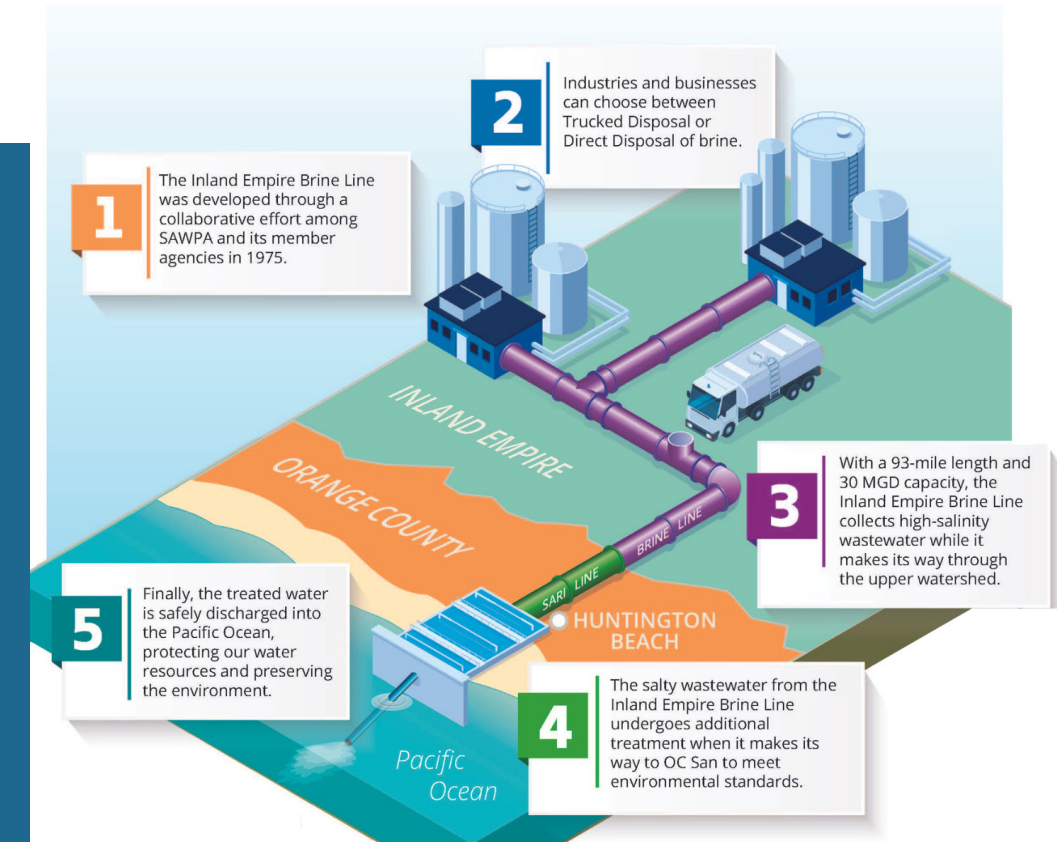


The Santa Ana River Watershed CARP is supported by the Regional Resilience Grant Program at the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI).

Inland Empire Brine Line

The Inland Empire Brine Line is an effective and economical way to dispose of salty wastewater produced through manufacturing and water treatment processes. Salinity management is important for protecting water quality in the region and meeting regulatory requirements.

The Brine Line removes 500,000 pounds of salt per day from the watershed by transporting salty wastewater to a wastewater treatment plant operated by the Orange County Sanitation District. After treatment, the water is discharged into the Pacific Ocean.



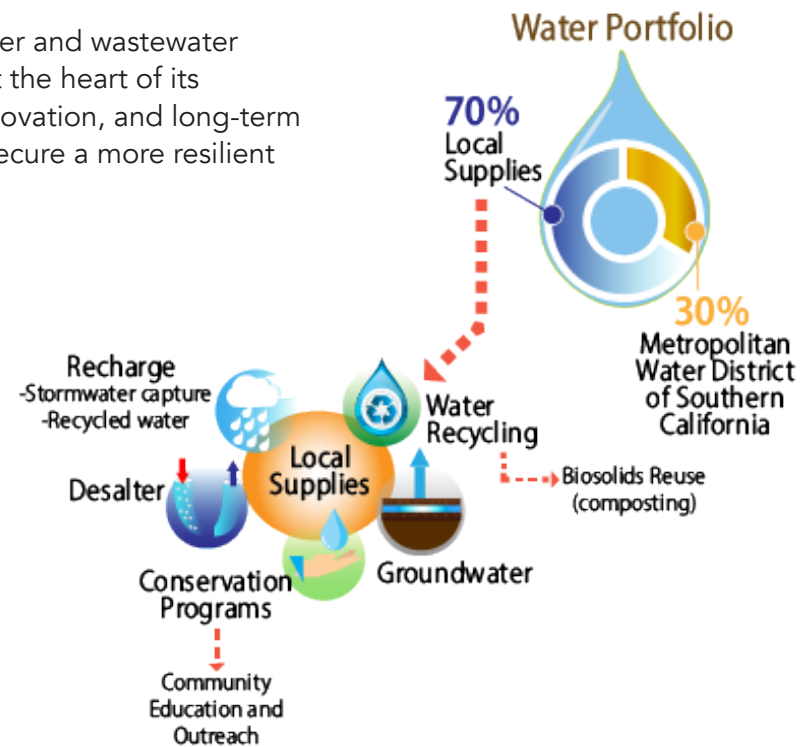
IEUA's Model for a Sustainable Future



The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA/Agency) plays a vital role in managing water and wastewater services for approximately 950,000 residents in western San Bernardino County. At the heart of its mission is environmental stewardship, an approach that emphasizes sustainability, innovation, and long-term resource management. Through a variety of forward-thinking initiatives, IEUA helps secure a more resilient future for the Inland Empire.

Turning Wastewater into a Valuable Resource

One of IEUA's most impactful efforts is its commitment to water recycling to enhance reliability and reduce dependence on imported water. IEUA currently receives over 52 million gallons per day of wastewater from its regional treatment plants. This water is treated to Title 22 regulations set forth by the State Division of Drinking Water and distributed throughout the service area to be used for agriculture, municipal irrigation, industrial uses, and groundwater replenishment. Recycled water makes up approximately 17% of the region's water supply!

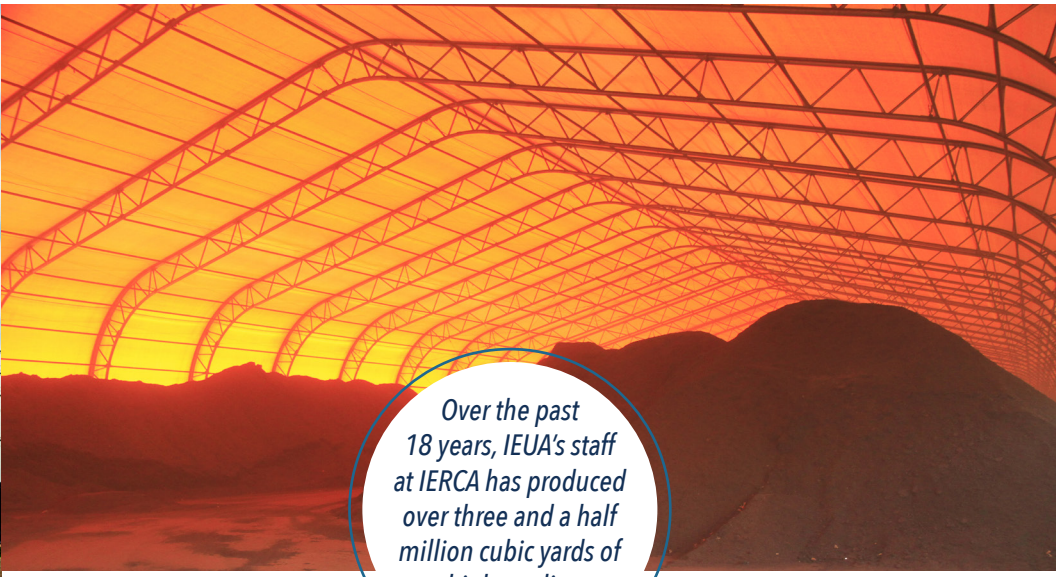


Recharging the Region's Groundwater

IEUA, the Chino Basin Watermaster, the Chino Basin Water Conservation District, and the San Bernardino County Flood Control District jointly sponsor the Chino Basin Recycled Water Groundwater Recharge (GWR) Program, a vital program that serves as a long-term solution to the water supply and water quality issues facing the greater Chino Basin.

IEUA staff manages and operates the GWR infrastructure which consists of a network of pipelines that direct stormwater runoff, imported water from the State Water Project, and recycled water from IEUA's treatment plants to 19 recharge sites, most of which consist of multiple recharge basins. These recharge basins are located throughout IEUA's service area and are designed to hold water so that it can percolate into the ground, replenishing the alluvial aquifers and groundwater supply.

In FY 24/25, the Agency recharged 44,762 acre-feet of water through the GWR program, which could serve over 90,000 households.



Over the past 18 years, IEUA's staff at IERCA has produced over three and a half million cubic yards of high-quality compost.

It Doesn't Stop with Water Recycling – Biosolids are a Resource too:

IEUA's full-circle approach to environmental stewardship also extends to waste reduction. Biosolids generated during the wastewater treatment process are transported to the Inland Empire Regional Composting Authority (IERCA) in Rancho Cucamonga, the largest fully-enclosed composting facility in North America, and transformed into nutrient-rich, USDA Certified Biobased compost used in agriculture and landscaping.



In FY 24/25, 3,934 megawatt hours of renewable energy was generated onsite, enough to provide electricity to at least 376 homes for one year.

Powering Operations with Renewable Energy

Wastewater treatment uses a lot of energy. And, as IEUA keeps pace with emerging technologies and meeting new regulatory requirements, that energy demand continues to increase. IEUA has embraced the water-energy nexus by investing in renewable power at several facilities. IEUA's renewable energy portfolio was strategically developed by identifying how available resources could be applied to incorporate environmentally friendly technologies capable of producing energy at a rate comparable to grid import pricing.

Since 2008, IEUA has successfully incorporated solar, wind, and battery storage into its facilities to reduce demand on the electric grid, demonstrating how utilities can integrate sustainability into everyday functions. Today, IEUA is working to update its Energy Management Plan to address future needs, including exploring the use of biogas.



Inspiring a Culture of Sustainability

Beyond its technical initiatives, IEUA prides itself on its high standards of community outreach. Through conservation programs and public engagement efforts, the Agency encourages residents and businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

The Agency's education offerings reached over 4,100 K-12 community members, scout troops, and after-school participants during FY 24/25.

Education programs offered to K-12 students within IEUA's service area are significant tools toward investing in our future. These programs include an annual Earth Day celebration, "Water is Life" poster contest, Water Scout Badge Program, and more.

Among the most popular in its educational portfolio are the Water Discovery field trips to the Chino Creek Wetlands and Educational Park. Aligned with California State Curriculum Standards; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM); and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), this program features activities and experiences that illustrate water-use efficiency methods, origination and sustainability of water resources, and water-saving techniques.

Securing a Sustainable Water Future

Through innovation, resource recovery, and community engagement, the Inland Empire Utilities Agency demonstrates how innovation and environmental stewardship go hand-in hand when it comes to securing tomorrow's water, today. ○

Carancho Pump Station sits in the rural De Luz part of Temecula

Rancho Water's Elevated Approach to Reliability and Fire Defense



Rancho Water is advancing critical infrastructure projects that strengthen water reliability while also improving wildfire response in rural communities that face fire danger year-round. Two key efforts, the Carancho Pump Station Expansion and Improvement Project and the installation of helicopter dip tanks, highlight how strategic investments in water systems can support both daily service needs and emergency preparedness.

The Carancho Pump Station is located in a rural portion of Rancho Water's service area characterized by steep terrain, limited infrastructure, and elevated wildfire risk. The station plays an essential role in moving water through the system to serve customers in these outlying communities.

To ensure that system demands can be met during extreme events, Rancho Water launched a \$7 million expansion and improvement project in early 2025, with completion anticipated in mid-2026. The project includes replacing two existing pumps, adding two new pumps, installing emergency backup power, and constructing 600 feet of potable water pipeline. Importantly, \$5 million of the funding was secured through the American Rescue Plan Act, reinforcing the value of investing in resilient infrastructure.

These improvements will significantly increase the station's capacity and operational reliability, ensuring that water can be delivered consistently across a challenging and dispersed service area. For customers, this means a more dependable water supply under normal conditions and during peak demand.

Just as critical, the upgrades enhance Rancho Water's ability to support firefighting efforts. Rural communities often rely heavily on water system infrastructure during wildfire events, when sustained water pressure and volume are essential. With increased pumping capacity and emergency power in place, the Carancho Pump Station will be better equipped to maintain service during power outages and high-demand scenarios, directly supporting ground-based fire suppression.

Complementing this system-wide investment is a focused initiative to improve aerial firefighting capabilities in the same high-risk areas. With the support of a \$500,000 grant from the County of Riverside, Rancho Water is partnering with CAL FIRE to install helicopter dip tanks in rural

communities near De Luz and the Santa Rosa Plateau, areas that regularly face wildfire threats due to dry vegetation, open space, and difficult access.

Helicopter dip tanks are dedicated fire-suppression water sources that allow firefighting aircraft to refill quickly and efficiently during emergencies. By strategically placing these tanks closer to wildfire-prone areas, helicopters can access water more rapidly, reducing turnaround times and increasing the frequency of aerial water drops. This can play a critical role in slowing the spread of fast-moving fires and supporting containment efforts.

A helicopter fights wildfire in an aerial attack.

In regions where natural water sources may be scarce or difficult to reach, these dip tanks provide a reliable and consistent supply for firefighting operations. Their placement has been carefully planned to maximize effectiveness in protecting lives, property, and natural resources throughout the greater Temecula-Murrieta region.

Work on the helicopter dip tank project is currently underway, with full completion expected by the end of 2026. Once operational, these facilities will serve as an important tool in the region's wildfire response network.

Together, the Carancho Pump Station improvements and helicopter dip tank installations demonstrate Rancho Water's commitment to a comprehensive approach to resilience. By strengthening core infrastructure and enhancing emergency response capabilities, Rancho Water is helping ensure that rural customers have reliable access to water while also improving protection against one of the region's most persistent threats.

As wildfire risks continue to intensify across California, these investments reflect a forward-thinking strategy that prioritizes both water reliability and community safety. ○



For more information on Rancho Water projects, visit RanchoWater.com



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The ban on watering unused grass on public and commercial properties, including HOA common areas, starts January 2027.

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As the region's largest water provider, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) is in a position unique from other California water agencies.



Officials from Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) and the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) sign a 21-year water purchase agreement in San Diego on April 9, 2026.



On one hand, EMWD is the state's sixth-largest public retail water agency, serving more than 1 million people across a 682-square mile service area straddling Riverside and San Diego Counties. On the other hand, its service area is just 44 percent built out and among the fastest growing in the state. With this comes the challenge of planning for today's water supply needs and accommodating substantial anticipated growth.

That challenge is met through investments in resiliency and collaboration.

EMWD has one of the state's most diverse water supply portfolios, which benefits customers through increased reliability, even during times of drought. This spring, it further expanded its portfolio through a new partnership with the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA). That partnership will increase reliability and is expected to provide long-term cost savings when compared to other water supply sources.

A water supply portfolio is no different than a stock portfolio, where diversification matters. For example, investing solely in technology stocks can be boom-or-bust. A well-rounded portfolio invests in many sectors to provide stability, even during unstable market conditions. A water supply portfolio is no different. Different sources may face short- or long-term challenges associated with supply, quality, and infrastructure. But a broad portfolio helps weather the storms – or lack thereof.

EMWD relies on imported water from the Colorado River and State Water Project systems through their partnership with The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. It has also invested in groundwater, a nationally-recognized groundwater desalination program, and a recycled water program that is widely considered the gold standard in its industry.

While those investments can reliably meet current needs, they may not be enough for the future. Each year, EMWD grows by approximately 3,500 new connections. To meet those needs, they

must strategically plan for their water supply future and embrace collaborative partnerships.

"The partnership with San Diego is a prime example of thinking outside of the box," said EMWD Board President Stephen J. Corona. "EMWD's area has experienced significant growth, while SDCWA has surplus water from its own investments."

The two agencies reached an agreement allowing EMWD to purchase 10,000 acre feet of Colorado River water each year – enough for 25,000 households annually – at a rate that will provide long-term cost savings when compared to other sources."

The agency is also deep into discussions of a strategic partnership to fund part of the planned Doheny Ocean Desalination Facility. This project, led by Orange County-based South Coast Water District, will produce 5 million gallons of ocean desalinated water each day. By funding a portion of the costs, EMWD will receive an equitable transfer of high-quality State Water Project water.

Additionally, EMWD is leveraging partnerships to expand its local water supplies. This year, EMWD will break ground on its new Purified Water Replenishment project, which will further clean recycled water so it can be used to replenish local groundwater basins. That project has received significant grant funding from the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the State Water Resources Control Board. Those partnerships enable EMWD to expand infrastructure while continuing to provide value to their customers.

The region is growing, and EMWD's portfolio is doing the same. By investing in projects designed to enhance resiliency, and embracing a collaborative approach to water management, EMWD ensures their customers can have confidence in a safe and reliable water supply for generations to come. ○



EMWD Board President, Stephen Corona addresses the SDCWA Board of Directors during the April 9th board meeting.

"The partnership with San Diego is a prime example of thinking outside of the box."

Stephen J. Corona
President
Eastern Municipal Water District



JCSD Strengthens the Role of Water Agencies in Wildfire Response



California water agencies are facing an increasingly complex set of challenges, including maintaining reliable water supplies, addressing emerging contaminants, navigating evolving regulatory requirements, and strengthening emergency preparedness. While water agencies have always played a critical role in supporting fire response through reliable supply and system pressure, recent wildfires have heightened the focus on their role in emergency response.

The Palisades and Altadena fires have underscored the devastating impacts these events can have on communities. While water agencies are responsible for providing safe and reliable water and supporting routine fire suppression and structural fires, they were not originally designed to address the scale and intensity of today's wildfires, fueled by extreme weather. Through its Public Safety and Wildfire Protection Project, the Jurupa Community Services District (JCSD) is helping lead the conversation on how water agencies can adapt to this evolving challenge.

At JCSD, fire preparedness is approached as a proactive, multi-layered strategy rooted in planning, innovation, and collaboration. At the center of JCSD's Public Safety and Wildfire Protection Project is a forward-thinking solution that redefines how water infrastructure can support emergency response: a comprehensive network of Heli-Hydrants, designed specifically for wildfire scenarios, that allow firefighting aircraft

to quickly refill without traveling long distances to traditional water sources. These tanks serve as critical refill points for aerial firefighting operations, reducing turnaround times and improving response efficiency.

JCSD is actively building a network of Heli-Hydrants strategically placed throughout its service area to support aerial firefighting operations. The first Heli-Hydrant is already operational in Jurupa Valley and has been used to support responses to multiple wildfire incidents, with a second unit planned for construction later this year. This system provides agencies such as CAL FIRE with fast, reliable access to water, significantly enhancing their ability to respond quickly to fire incidents. Upon completion, a total of four Heli-Hydrants will be constructed across nearly every quadrant of the JCSD's service area. JCSD has established partnerships with neighboring agencies and funding sources to support the project, fostering a shared regional commitment to public safety. JCSD's Heli-Hydrant Program has been recognized by the Association of California Water Agencies with its Innovation of the Year award, highlighting its value as a scalable solution to emerging challenges in water management and public safety.

JCSD's efforts extend beyond its service area through its role in uniting the broader water community on fire response issues. By investing in fire readiness, JCSD is demonstrating how water agencies can evolve from their traditional roles, leveraging infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation to serve as a critical line of defense in wildfire response.

In Sacramento, JCSD is spearheading a coalition of more than 40 public agencies to advocate for funding through Proposition 4 for helicopter-accessible infrastructure to combat wildfire emergencies. Through these efforts, Assembly members James Gallagher and Nick Schultz introduced AB 1893, which would add the acquisition and installation of mobile rigid dip tanks and similar helicopter-accessible water supply infrastructure to eligible future wildfire prevention grant opportunities. These actions highlight the importance of coordination and collaboration, aligning partners and priorities to strengthen emergency preparedness statewide.

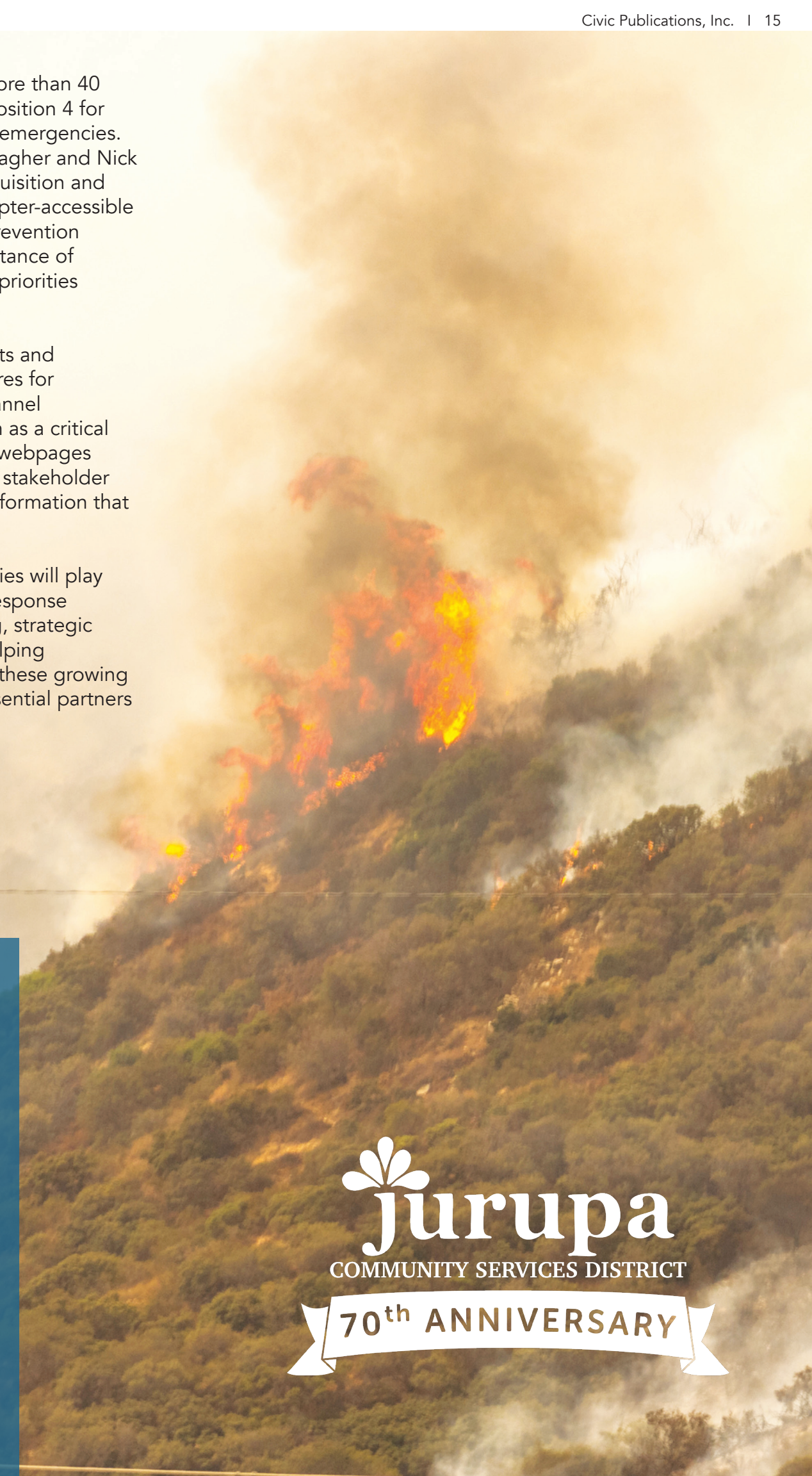
JCSD has also taken proactive steps to ensure residents and community leaders understand how the District prepares for fire emergencies. Through a comprehensive, multi-channel communications effort, JCSD has prioritized education as a critical component of emergency readiness. From dedicated webpages and social media updates to community outreach and stakeholder coordination, JCSD provides centralized, accessible information that empowers the public to stay informed.

As wildfire conditions continue to evolve, water agencies will play an increasingly visible role in supporting emergency response and community resilience. Through proactive planning, strategic partnerships, and innovative infrastructure, JCSD is helping demonstrate how the water sector can adapt to meet these growing demands. These efforts position water agencies as essential partners in protecting communities now and into the future. ○



"Wildfire preparedness is not something any agency can tackle alone. By bringing together regional partners, we are building a unified approach that strengthens our collective ability to respond to emergencies."

Chris Berch
General Manager
Jurupa Community Services District



Executing One of the Largest Capital Improvement Programs in the Inland Empire



Delivering reliable infrastructure, strengthening local water supplies and investing in the future of the communities we serve

Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD) is executing one of the largest capital improvement programs in the Inland Empire, investing in infrastructure that improves reliability, secures local water supplies and supports a growing community.

From major infrastructure upgrades to expanding water and sewer systems, each project plays a role in keeping service reliable and meeting the needs of a growing region. This work includes sewer expansion projects and major upgrades to water and wastewater treatment facilities that increase capacity, improve performance and support future growth. Together, these efforts help ensure water and wastewater systems continue to run efficiently as demand increases.

At the same time, the district is working to strengthen and diversify its water supplies. By investing in local sources, EVMWD is reducing reliance on imported water and improving long-term reliability.

Diamond Regional Sewer Lift Station

Strengthening the backbone of a growing community

Beneath the streets of Lake Elsinore, a major infrastructure project is underway to support the community's growing needs.

The Diamond Regional Sewer Lift Station and Dual Force Mains Project is a key part of EVMWD's efforts to improve reliability and plan for future growth. Located near Diamond Stadium, the project expands system capacity and improves how wastewater is moved and managed across the region.

Construction began in October 2024 and continues in multiple phases to support future development. At the center of the project is a new sewer lift station that can handle up to 10 million gallons of wastewater per day, significantly increasing system capacity and improving reliability.

About 3,400 feet of new sewer pipelines have been installed beneath Malaga Road and the intersection of Elm Street and Lakeshore Drive to support the upgraded system. These pipelines increase capacity and provide redundancy, helping ensure reliable service even if part of the system is offline.

As construction has progressed, key elements of the project are now in place. The perimeter wall surrounds the site, the underground pipelines are complete, and the operations building is taking shape. Construction crews have also installed underground electrical and drainage systems to support backup power and keep the system running without interruption.

Construction crews are also testing the new sewer pipeline and completing restoration work near Lakeshore Drive. This work reflects the district's effort to minimize impacts to the community while delivering needed upgrades.



Work continues near Malaga Road and Diamond Drive as crews advance the Diamond Regional Sewer Lift Station project.

A Cleaner, More Efficient System

In addition to increasing capacity, the project improves overall system operations. By consolidating and downsizing older lift stations, the district is reducing odor issues that have periodically affected nearby neighborhoods. The result is a more efficient system and a better solution for the community.

This work also helps prepare the sewer system for future planned projects. Ensuring the new lift station is fully operational ahead of those efforts is a key priority.

On Track for Completion

Construction is moving forward with a projected completion in December 2026. The Diamond Regional project supports public health, environmental protection and continued growth in the region.

Each future phase brings added capacity and improved reliability, helping the system keep up with current needs and future growth.

This work plays a critical role in maintaining reliable service and supporting the community's growing needs every day.

Connecting Communities to EVMWD's Sewer System

In some neighborhoods, growth has outpaced existing infrastructure, creating the need for more reliable wastewater service.

In the Sedco Hills and Avenues communities, EVMWD is transitioning homes from individual septic systems to EVMWD's sewer system. This investment helps protect groundwater, improve public health and provide more reliable service for residents.

Septic systems have served these communities for many years. But as neighborhoods grow, a regional sewer system provides a more reliable and efficient way to manage wastewater. Connecting these areas to EVMWD's sewer system helps protect local water resources while improving overall system performance.



Sedco Hills neighborhood will transition from septic systems to EVMWD's sewer system, with construction beginning in June 2026 and full conversion expected by mid-2028.

Protecting Local Water Quality

A key goal of this effort is protecting local groundwater. While septic systems work well in areas without centralized sewer systems, they can pose risks to water quality as communities grow. Connecting homes to a centralized sewer system helps reduce those risks and protect local water supplies.

This work is part of EVMWD's Sewer Master Plan, which helps guide infrastructure improvements that support current residents and future growth.

Better Performance, More Reliability

In addition to environmental benefits, connecting to sewer improves efficiency and reliability. Centralized systems can handle higher volumes more consistently, reducing the risk of backups, failures and costly maintenance often associated with aging septic systems.

For residents, this means more reliable service and fewer issues. For the region, it strengthens the overall wastewater system and supports continued growth.

This work is fully funded through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), a statewide program that provides low-cost financing for water infrastructure projects. This funding allows communities like Sedco Hills and Avenues to move forward with needed upgrades.

The goal is a modern sewer system that supports healthier neighborhoods and a cleaner environment. While much of this work happens underground, it plays an important role in protecting water quality and supporting reliable service every day. ○



Sunrise Ranch

Today's Investment for Tomorrow's Legacy

Since 1954, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District has worked to secure a reliable and sustainable water supply while serving as a regional leader in water and watershed management. Sunrise Ranch — a 1,658-acre property acquired in 2022 — represents a powerful continuation of that legacy. While in the early stages of planning and design, the property is perfectly situated to enhance regional water security, preserve rare habitats, and create new possibilities for public open space and beyond.

Sunrise Ranch is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of the watershed. From the start, the vision has been guided by two core objectives: supporting water supply reliability and generating economic value through the protection of habitat suitable for mitigation. The site holds significant potential for new water infrastructure, including high-elevation storage and system enhancements that improve resilience, capacity, and long-term water security. At the same time, it offers opportunities to conserve sensitive habitats, supporting both the District's projects and broader regional needs.

Water supply infrastructure remains the highest priority, with opportunities to develop reservoirs and conveyance systems that enhance reliability and maximize available resources. Complementing these are habitat and mitigation strategies that support conservation goals, protect open space at the wildland-urban interface, and contribute to broader regional environmental efforts.

Beyond infrastructure, Sunrise Ranch is envisioned as a place of connection and discovery. Public recreation

opportunities — including trails, scenic viewpoints, and educational features — could allow visitors to engage with the landscape and better understand the importance of watershed management. Potential facilities, such as a modern headquarters, education center, and collaborative spaces, would further strengthen the District's ability to serve the region while fostering community engagement and learning.

As Sunrise Ranch evolves, it can be shaped by thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and a commitment to long-term sustainability. Each step forward reflects an intentional effort to balance innovation with stewardship, ensuring the property delivers lasting value.

Ultimately, Sunrise Ranch represents a vision where water reliability, environmental preservation, and public benefit are not separate pursuits, but interconnected priorities. It is a place where today's investment becomes tomorrow's legacy — delivering enduring benefits for the watershed, the community, and generations to come.

To view the Sunrise Ranch Master Plan, visit www.sbvmd.com



**A REGIONAL WATER AGENCY
SINCE 1954**



Sunrise Ranch is a 1,658-acre property situated in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains.

The State Water Project

Powering the Inland Empire

The State Water Project (SWP) is California's most critical water infrastructure. It supports a \$4 trillion economy — \$19 billion alone in agriculture — 8.7 million full-time jobs, and delivers affordable, high-quality water to 27 million Californians and irrigates 750,000 acres of farmland.

Just as we should not take for granted our interstate highways, railways, or telecommunications systems, we must not underestimate the important management and operation efforts in place to make the State Water Project possible for most of California.

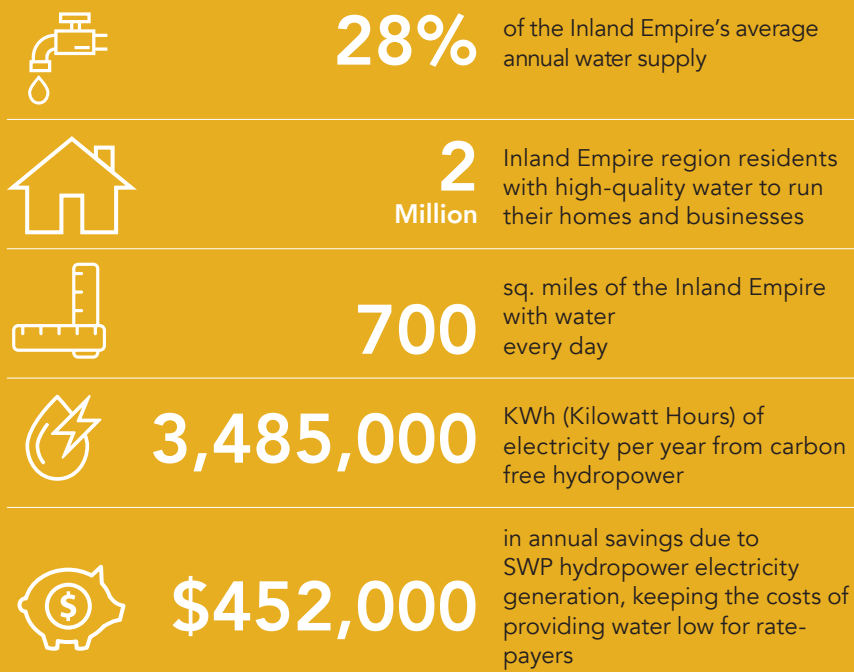
California's Inland Empire wouldn't be the same without the State Water Project. State Water Project supplies are imported through the East Branch into Lake Perris. These supplies make up 28% of the Inland Empire's water in an average year, enough for over 2 million residents.

A Foundation for Regional Prosperity

The State Water Project fuels the Inland Empire's booming housing, construction, manufacturing, and transportation industries and supports many of the warehouse fulfillment centers that enable e-commerce across our entire state. Its affordability and reliability are essential to the region and the entire state, making local water supply projects possible by providing the source water needed to fuel local stormwater capture, groundwater storage and recycling.

Without the State Water Project, the Inland Empire region would need to replace 26,541,215,652 gallons of high-quality water annually to meet regional demand.

THE SWP PROVIDES



FRESH WATER THE INLAND EMPIRE CAN RELY ON



A Cleaner, More Efficient System

The Inland Empire has important local supplies, including groundwater basins with significant storage capacity, local rivers and recycled water. The water supplied by the State Water Project helps to recharge the groundwater basins that currently provide the majority of the region's supplies, provides the source water for recycling, and augments local river supplies to ensure compliance with tribal and other settlements.

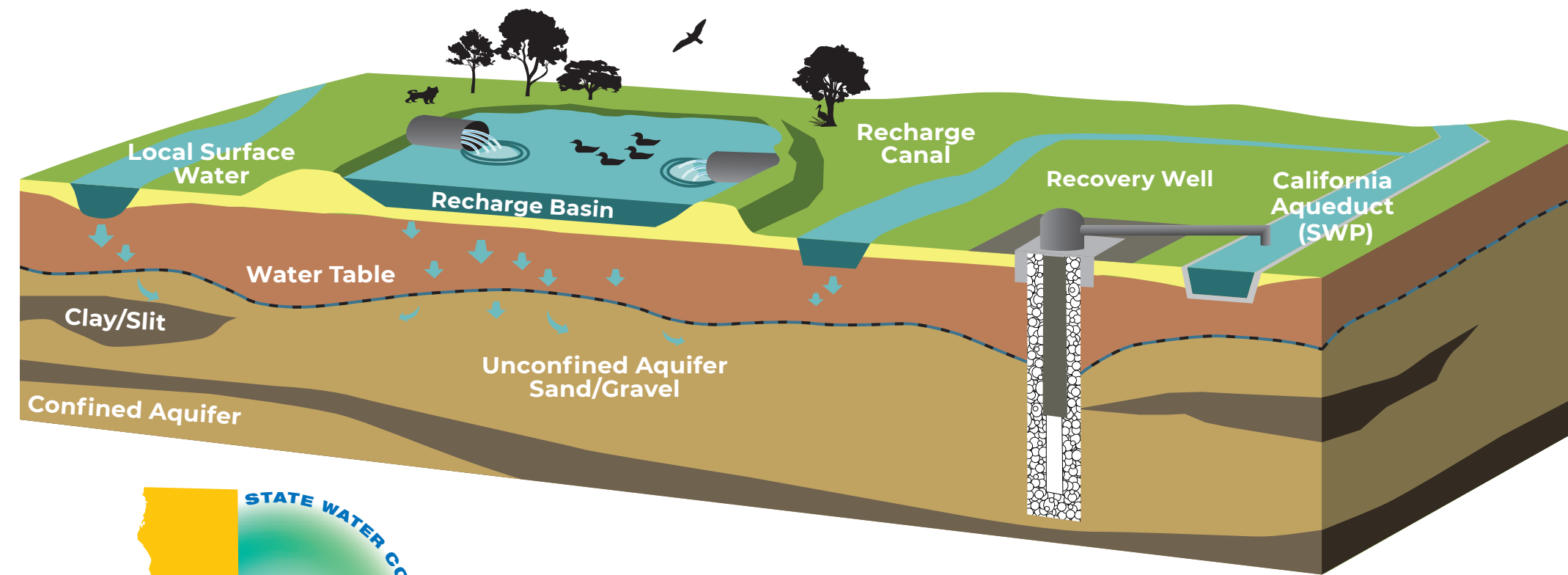
During California's historic five-year 2012-2016 drought, State Water Project supplies were critical to maintaining a balanced groundwater basin, avoiding severe water use restrictions and meeting local demand.

State Water Project supplies in the Inland Empire are used to:

- Manage groundwater basin water quality
- Replenish groundwater basins with surface water to maintain sustainable levels
- Blend with Colorado River water to meet drinking water standards
- Exchange with Colorado River, Santa Ana River users and others
- Meet tribal settlement agreement obligations
- Support economic and housing growth

The State Water Contractor's goal is to protect and maintain the State Water Project so it can continue to deliver water affordability for farms, homes and businesses in the Inland Empire and throughout the state. ○

THE STATE WATER PROJECT AND GROUNDWATER RECHARGE



THE SWP SUPPORTS



*Southern California Association of Governments Industrial Warehousing Study, 2018
 **United State Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018
 ***California State Parks, Lake Perris State Recreation Area Brochure, 2016



To learn more about the State Water Project and its impacts, visit swc.org/state-water-project.

"We have to understand how these big projects interact with smaller local resilience projects and have a real conversation of the cost and the value," Nemeth said.

The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) is a regional wastewater treatment agency and wholesale distributor of imported water. "IEUA has long recognized the uncertainty that comes with relying on imported supplies as a State Water Project dependent agency, especially during periods of drought," said IEUA General Manager Kevin Alexander. "For years we have been expanding our existing recycled water program, and the Chino Basin Program is the next major component of that effort. The CBP addresses local water challenges by investing in local water treatment, storage, and delivery, making the region less vulnerable to fluctuations of imported water. A new Advanced Water Purification Facility will produce up to 15,000 acre-feet per year of high-quality water injected directly into the Chino Basin for groundwater replenishment."

Eastern Municipal Water District, which serves western Riverside County and northern San Diego County, has invested for decades in local water supplies and collaborative partnerships to create a diverse supply portfolio. "This includes recycled water, groundwater desalination, and long-term agreements with other agencies to support our rapidly growing region, said EMWD Board President Stephen Corona. "For all we have done, we cannot continue to do this alone. For generations, California has found every excuse to delay critical statewide water projects such as the DCP and Sites Reservoir. The time to advance these projects is now, before it is too late."

Nemeth, who worked with both Gov. Jerry Brown and Gov. Gavin Newsom, has witnessed many changes, challenges, and accomplishments in state water policy. She is optimistic that SB 72 will guide the administration of the next governor, to be chosen by voters this November.

"Governors don't necessarily come in with a water agenda, though they often arrive with infrastructure agendas that include water," said Nemeth. She added that a good understanding of water is necessary. "Everyone has lots of expectations of a governor when it stops raining."

SB 72 gives both the legislative and executive branch ownership of a useful and relevant state water plan, Nemeth said. However, a delay in progress by a new administration carries serious risk.

"There's very little stability right now in our climate and precipitation is unpredictable. So, every year is a new challenge. Those new challenges really do two things: They highlight the deficiency of our system, which is painful. And if we don't have a comprehensive strategy to respond to those conditions, it gets challenging to keep people working together. It's hard to tell people in the throes of a water emergency that we're getting to it," Nemeth said. "There's a human instinct to find the one thing or the one person that's going to solve our problems. I think the path to success is more comprehensive. We need deep reflection on our institutions about the role we can play and how we show up to start addressing these issues." ○



Nemeth, at right and speaking at a ribbon cutting below, has led state water strategies under two gubernatorial administrations.



The Science of Stewardship

Water in Southern California comes from many places – diverted from local streams and rivers, imported through long-distance canals from Northern California or the Colorado River, recycled from wastewater, and pumped from underground aquifers. In the San Bernardino Valley, the most reliable and lowest-cost source is groundwater held in a massive natural aquifer called the San Bernardino Basin.

Groundwater recharge is simple stewardship at its finest: Instead of letting stormwater and mountain runoff flow down the river and into the ocean, we slow it down and give it time to soak into the ground. As water moves through layers of sand, gravel, and soil, it is naturally filtered and stored in the aquifer below – like water filling a vast underground reservoir. This stored water can then be pumped by cities, farmers, and industries for use when it's needed most.

Since 1912, the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District has recharged more than 500 billion gallons of water by guiding flows from the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek into a network of 88 percolation basins. These basins are designed to spread water over a large area, allowing it to sink into the aquifer at a steady, natural pace. This approach supports a stable local water supply while working with, rather than against, the environment.

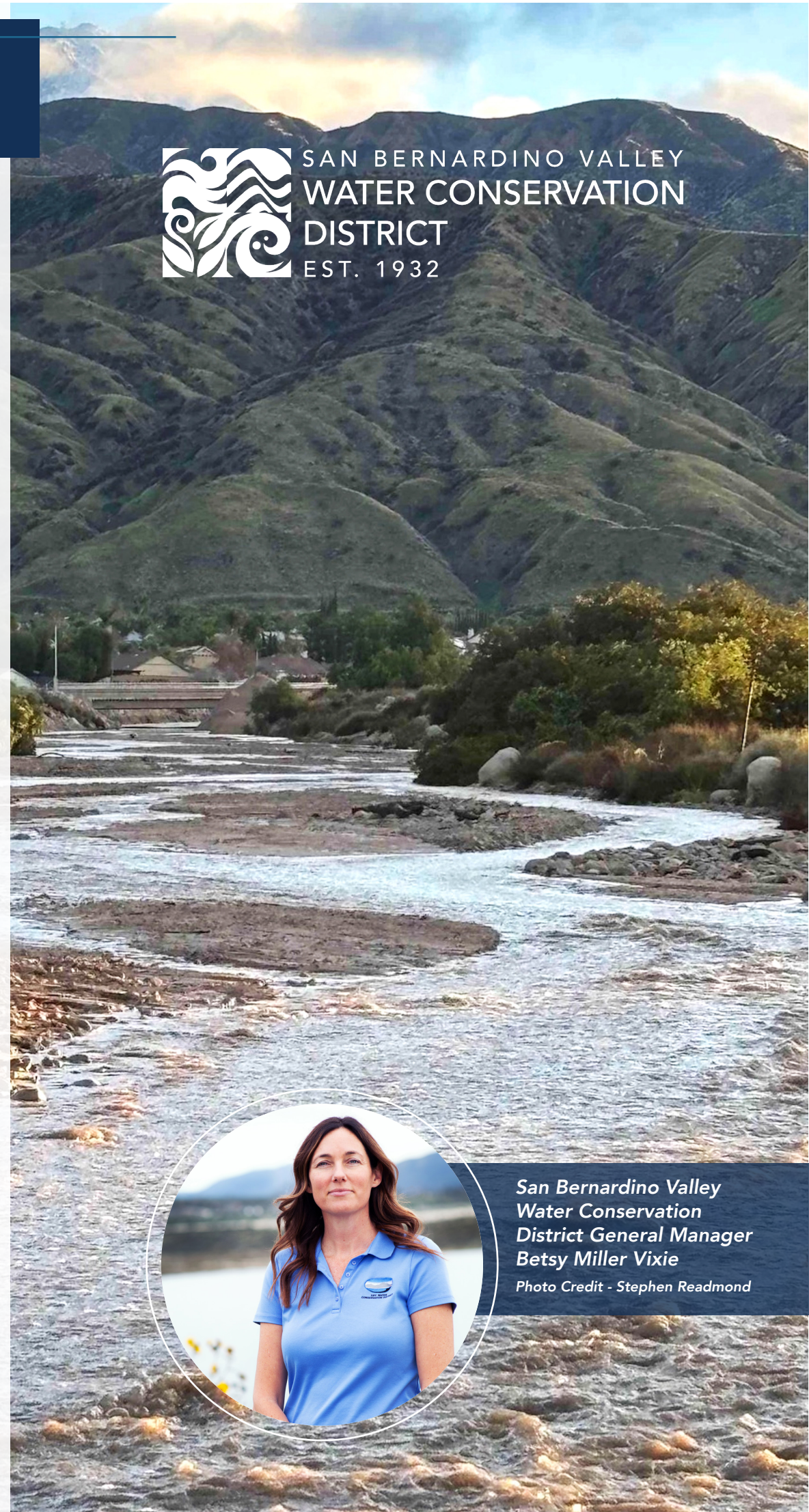
How Recharge Works Here

Recharge is especially effective in the San Bernardino Basin because of the valley's natural geology. Water arriving from the mountains carries energy and sediment, but when it reaches the District's percolation basins on the valley floor, it slows down. The ground beneath much of the valley consists of an alluvial fan of porous materials like sand, gravel, and cobbles that allow water to move easily into the aquifer. In this way, the landscape itself does much of the work.

Informed by Data

Careful measurement supports this process. The District tracks groundwater levels, recharge amounts, basin conditions, and water quality. This information guides operations during storms, informs maintenance plans, and is the foundation for coordination with regional partners. Over time, these data are also used to refine recharge methods under changing conditions. "We are grateful to our partners for helping shape a more resilient future as we advance innovation and honor natural systems," says General Manager Betsy Miller Vixie. "Together, we are inspiring the next generation of conservation-minded leaders and stewards committed to groundwater management." ○

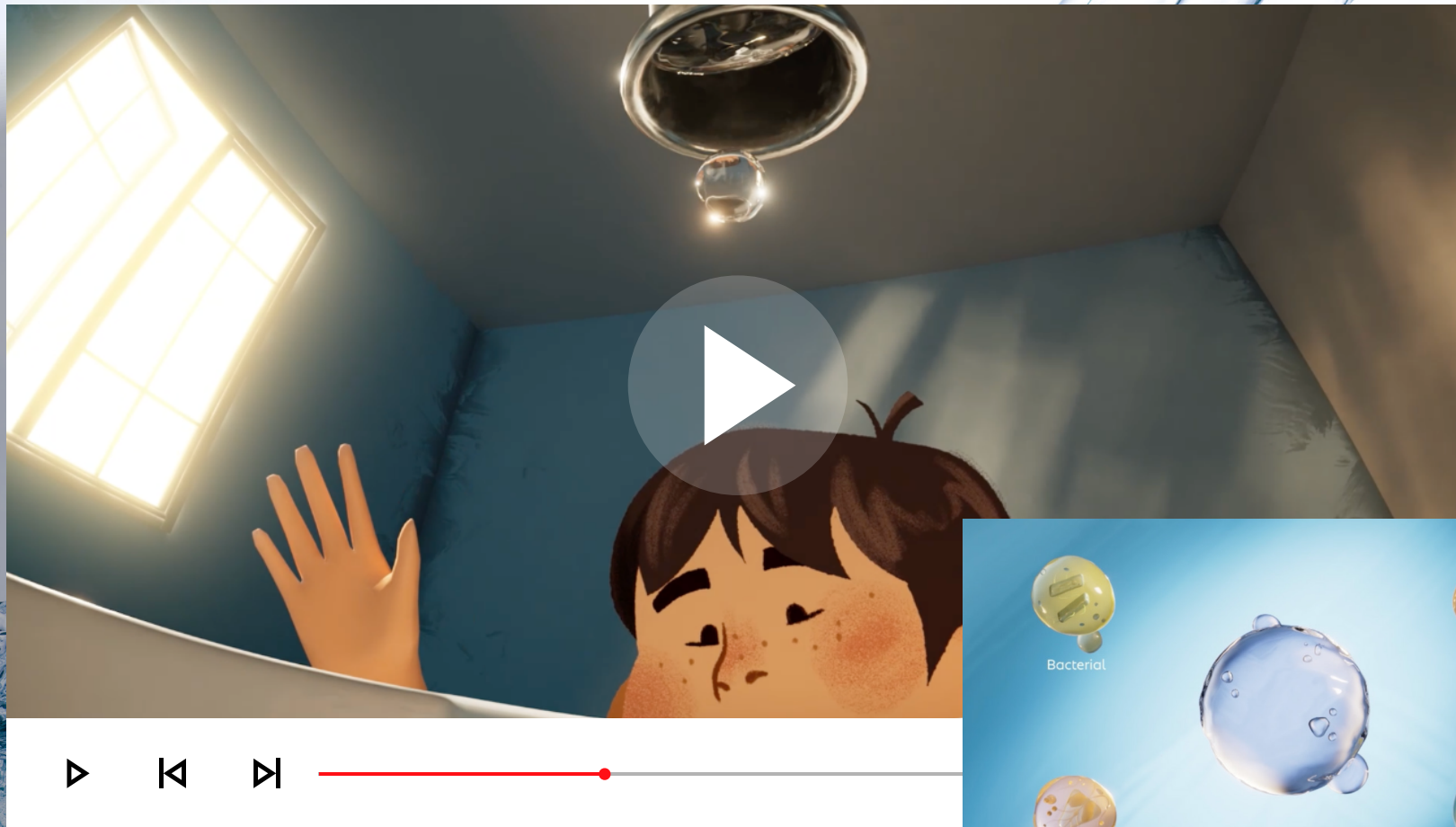
sbwaterconservation.gov



*San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District General Manager Betsy Miller Vixie
Photo Credit - Stephen Readmond*



Learn How Wastewater Becomes Drinking Water



Did you know that California now has some of the world's strongest rules for direct potable reuse? Watch how advanced purification makes safe, great tasting drinking water.

The Southern California Water Coalition and its sponsors present *Renewed: The Journey to Safe Drinking Water*, a four-minute animated video that has been viewed more than 2 million times since its release in March 2026. The video illustrates how advanced purification technology accelerates the Earth's natural water cycle, transforming wastewater into a pure, safe, and reliable drinking water source.

Brought to you by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Eastern Municipal Water District, HDR, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Parsons, WateReuse, Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, Moulton Niguel Water District, WateReuse California, Carollo, and Black & Veatch.



Watch the video in English or Spanish at www.socalwater.org/renewed/ or by scanning this QR code.