



Whittier Narrows Treatment Plant has the capacity to treat 3,600 gallons of water per minute and left, Plant B5 in the unincorporated area of LA County near the city of Industry has the capacity to treat 7,800 gallons of water per minute.

Progress seen in San Gabriel Valley groundwater cleanup

The San Gabriel Valley Legislative Caucus, led by State Senator's Ed Hernandez and Bob Huff, met May 20 to hear a first-hand progress report from regulators and responsible parties relative to the ongoing cleanup of contaminants in the San Gabriel Valley's groundwater supply.

In light of California's on-going drought and serious water contamination issues in Flint, Mich., and elsewhere in the nation, the state legislators joined by Congresswomen Grace Napolitano and Judy Chu, whose districts include the San Gabriel Valley, were anxious to hear the update.



State Senators Bob Huff, Vice Chair, and Dr. Ed Hernandez, Chair, of the San Gabriel Valley Legislative Caucus.



Richard Hiatt, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 Chief, discusses the progress of groundwater cleanup in the San Gabriel Basin.

What they heard was that tremendous progress has been made over the past 23 years thanks to extraordinary efforts by multiple public and private parties but they still had a long way to go to rid the basin of massive chemical pollution.

"We have a good plan in place and it's just a matter of pushing to get it done as quickly as possible," said Ken Manning, executive director of the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority, which was created in 1993 to manage the effort. "It's not done until the Basin is clean."

The San Gabriel Basin, the main source of drinking water for 1.4 million people, was declared a Superfund site by the EPA in 1984 and since then efforts to clean up contaminants and make the water safe to drink have been under way.

As a result of the state's historic four-year drought, the Basin is at its lowest level in history, said Tony Zampello, Executive Officer of the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster.

"Because of the drought, the more self-sufficient we are in the San Gabriel Basin the less water we have to import from the Sacramento River Delta or Colorado River, which are more expensive and less reliable sources of water," Manning said.

Legislators heard from the EPA, members of the water community and several responsible parties such as Northrop Grumman and Aerojet Rocketdyne, who are paying a majority of the cleanup costs, which are expected to reach more than \$1.3 billion by 2036.



Judy Chu Congresswoman

The presentations focused on three of the six sites or Operable Units (OUs) within the San Gabriel Basin Superfund Site that are currently at important stages of design, construction and ongoing operations: Baldwin Park OU, Puente Valley OU and El Monte OU.

The Baldwin Park OU is the "gold standard" of groundwater cleanup operations, said Robert DiPrimio, Senior Vice President at San Gabriel Valley Water Company. To date, five treatment plants have been built, \$46 million in public funds expended and 87,000 pounds of contaminants removed from

the underground plume that measures eight miles long, one mile wide and several hundreds of feet deep.

The 15-year agreement among Baldwin Park OU's Responsible Parties for sharing the clean-up costs is set to expire next year but they assured

"... the public doesn't care about who is responsible for the contamination They just want it cleaned up."

— Ken Manning
WQA Executive Director

lawmakers that they are working with the Water Agencies and EPA to extend the agreement.

"There are some critical issues that need to be resolved but we feel confident in the next few months that the Responsible Parties and the Water Agencies will work out an agreement that will take us through the next decade," Manning said.

The Puente Valley OU has been beset by a series of delays prompted by the discovery of additional contaminants, which has triggered several redesigns to ensure the proper cleaning systems are installed.



Grace Napolitano Congresswoman

Matthew Williams, corporate director of real estate, facilities and environmental remediation for Northrop Grumman, said his company is working aggressively to pursue completion of the treatment program, which began in the 1980s. He estimated construction to be complete and the systems operational by early 2020.

Manning said the Puente Valley OU was probably the most frustrating of the six sites but that since Williams got involved in the project, the parties have been working diligently on a very robust program to treat the water in the Puente Valley.



Ed Chau Assemblymember

The cleanup process at the El Monte OU has been hampered by low water levels and regional groundwater pumping. A bigger issue is the discovery of hexavalent chromium right in the middle of the project site. The cleanup system has been built and the Responsible Parties are waiting for permits to be issued before turning on the pumps. "Hopefully that will happen by the end of the year", said Manning.

"The delays have been frustrating but the public doesn't care about who is responsible for the contamination," Manning said. "They just want it cleaned up." ○



Above: Ken Manning, Executive Director of the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority testifies before the legislative caucus regarding the need to continue cleanup of the San Gabriel Valley's groundwater basin. Below: More than 80 members of the public, city officials and water agency representatives attended a hearing hosted by the San Gabriel Valley Legislative Caucus regarding groundwater cleanup.



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