

DRAFT

It Takes a Village

San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority Thanks Cities, Water Districts and Federal Lawmakers for their Support

The best leaders recognize that sometimes their organization needs support from community partners and stakeholders to accomplish a long-range goal. To use a familiar cliché, “It takes a village.”

In the case of the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (WQA), that “village” is comprised of many cities and water agencies in the San Gabriel Valley plus a group of dedicated federal lawmakers. They are helping to assure that the WQA’s cleanup of contaminated groundwater water in the San Gabriel Valley will likely continue for several more years as new areas of contamination are found.

For the WQA to succeed, community support and adequate funding are vital.

“The successful, long-term cleanup of contamination in the Main San Gabriel Basin continues, and we will need more time and funds to clean up all the pollutants in the basin groundwater,” said WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman.

The WQA was recently awarded \$10 million in federal funds to further the groundwater remediation efforts in the Basin. The funding was included in an omnibus bill signed this spring. This is a major win for the WQA because it’s been difficult to obtain federal funding over the past decade due to changes in federal rules relating to earmarks.

WQA Board President Valerie Munoz and the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the leadership from California’s federal lawmakers who went to bat on behalf of the WQA for the new funding: Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and Representatives Grace Napolitano and Judy Chu. In addition, officials from many water districts and cities throughout the Valley wrote letters of support to their lawmakers on behalf of the WQA. The funds will eventually go to various water agencies and cities that operate water treatment facilities in the Basin.

The WQA is a special district created by the state in 1992 to plan, facilitate and provide funding to clean up the Main San Gabriel Basin, with a surface area of 169-square-mile overlying an aquifer with an estimated storage capacity of 8.6 million acre-feet that is the primary source of drinking water for about 1.4 million people in the San Gabriel Valley. The Basin was contaminated in the 1940s and 1950s when defense industry companies in the Valley disposed

of rocket fuel, industrial solvents and other chemicals by pouring them on the ground. Over time, the chemicals seeped into the groundwater. Once the responsible parties were identified by the EPA and others, the WQA secured funding from them and the government for the cleanup, so ratepayers don't bear the costs.

Part of the funding for the ongoing cleanup comes from San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund, established in 2000. The WQA continually seeks Congressional appropriations for this fund. This fund helps to incentivize responsible parties to come on board and help pay for the cleanup. The Restoration Fund also is tapped for matching funds to leverage more state funding opportunities where matching funds are needed.

"It's important to keep up a constant stream of funding from different sources. We never know what's coming and we need funding to deal with it. We don't want to have to pass the cost of the cleanup to the taxpayers," Schoellerman said.

The WQA is already working on its funding request for the 2023 fiscal year from the Restoration Fund, which begins Oct. 1, and is hoping for another \$10 million (the maximum allowed allocation). Learn more at www.wqa.com.

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Valerie Munoz pull-out quote for the layout:

"The cities, water districts and others came through with many letters of support for the WQA, sent to our elected representatives in Congress. We are greatly appreciative. We want to get this job done. Their support and leadership will help us continue our mission." – Valerie Munoz, Chairwoman of the WQA Board of Directors and Mayor Pro Tem of the City of La Puente