



Water Quality Authority

# ANNUAL 2021-2022 REPORT

San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority



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## who we are

The local agency responsible for overseeing the cleanup and restoration of the San Gabriel Groundwater Basin.

## what we do

**COORDINATE** Groundwater Cleanup

**INFORM** the Public

**CHARACTERIZE** Groundwater Contamination

**ASSIST** Cooperating Respondents

**PREVENT** or Minimize Migration of Contamination

**REMOVE** Contamination Quickly and Efficiently

**PROTECT** Groundwater Resources

**FUND** WQA Projects and Programs with Outside Funding Sources

## staff

**RANDY SCHOELLERMAN, P.E.**  
Executive Director

**DAN COLBY**  
Assistant Executive Director/  
Senior Project Manager

**MARY SAENZ, CPA**  
Director of Finance

**STEPHANIE A. MORENO, MPA**  
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Public Outreach Coordinator

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Administrative/Accounting Assistant

**RICHARD PADILLA** Legal Counsel



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**F**ront and center this fiscal year for the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority was a long-sought funding success. After 14 years without receiving funding for the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund, we received \$10 million as part of the omnibus bill signed in March 2022. We are grateful for the leadership of all of our federal lawmakers, and for the efforts by many of our overlying water districts and cities that helped secure this important funding. Support from our stakeholders made a big difference, thank you!



This advocacy will continue to be vital as we pursue an extension of the WQA beyond 2030. Our mission as established by the California legislature in 1993 to coordinate the cleanup of the San Gabriel Basin is far from complete. We must keep our 32 active groundwater treatment plants running efficiently. The basin's coordinated efforts have resulted in the treatment of more than 1.9 million acre-feet of water since our inception. Additionally, emerging contaminants such as hexavalent chromium (CrVI) and per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and new regulations that will pertain to them will likely make our role even more relevant for many years to come.

Partnerships also are essential to our mission. We continue to partner with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board to investigate known sources that may continue to fuel groundwater contamination in the Basin. Our work to investigate 12 high-priority sites is an example of that collaboration. Furthermore, we work with partners and stakeholders to inform and educate. I am especially proud that WQA assisted in the development of a user guide for Process

Memo 97-005, and held training webinars for the extremely impaired source 97-005 permitting process. This training is being utilized by water agencies and consultants as well as Division of Drinking Water and California EPA employees.

Funding, advocacy and partnerships were the highlights of the fiscal year. These components will continue to be necessary going forward to lessen the burden on ratepayers and clean up a basin that provides over 1.4 million people with clean, safe drinking water

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Schoellerman".

**Randy Schoellerman, P.E.**  
Executive Director



# Receipt of Federal Funds Is a Major Win



"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 Muñoz**  
**WQA Board President**

**F**or more than a decade, the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority has fought for the appropriation of federal funds. This fiscal year, \$10 million was secured to further the groundwater remediation efforts in the Basin via the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund). The funding was included in a Congressional 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. On the federal level, Congress lifted the ban on earmarks in early 2021, allowing for "community project funding" and "member directed funding" requests to the House and Senate appropriations committees, respectively.

We appreciate the leadership of all our federal lawmakers and the efforts of many of our water districts and cities in advocating for these funds. WQA Board President Valerie Muñoz and the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the leadership from California's federal lawmakers who advocated 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 be used to assist water agencies and cities to construct and operate water treatment facilities in the Basin.

The WQA continually seeks Congressional appropriations for the Restoration Fund that was established in 2000. This fund also helps to incentivize those responsible for contamination to come on board and help pay for the cleanup. Another major advantage of receiving Restoration Funds is the ability to use them as matching funds to leverage state funding opportunities.

"It's important to keep up a constant stream of funding from different sources. We never know what's coming and we are always in need of funding to swiftly address issues. We try to minimize the economic impact to the public whenever possible," said Executive Director Randy Schoellerman, P.E.





## CLEANUP BY THE NUMBERS

**1,904,699**

Acre-feet of groundwater treated in San Gabriel Basin as of June 30, 2022.

**325,851**

The amount of water in gallons in just one acre-foot.

**7,356**

The number of times you could fill the Rose Bowl with the 1.9 million acre-feet of treated water.

**204,698**

The amount in pounds of contaminants removed as of June 30, 2022.

**22**

The number of elephants equal to the weight of the contaminants removed.

**29**

Years WQA has been coordinating the cleanup effort.

**33**

Active groundwater treatment facilities in the San Gabriel Basin.

**2**

New treatment plants under construction.

## Our History in San Gabriel Basin

After severe groundwater contamination was detected in the San Gabriel Basin the EPA designated four Superfund sites in the area, a plan of action was needed. The WQA has coordinated the cleanup efforts since its creation more than 29 years ago. As a result, 1.9 million acre-feet of water has been treated, thus making the region less dependent upon imported water.

- 2022** WQA obtains an additional \$10M in Federal Restoration Funds.
- 2021** WQA Secures \$35M in Proposition 68 funding.
- 2020** WQA secures additional \$2.2M in Proposition 1 funding.
- 2019** Construction begins on the first reverse osmosis treatment system in the San Gabriel Valley.
- 2018** WQA advocates for the passage of Proposition 68.
- 2012** WQA secures \$10 million in state funding for four projects.
- 2009** WQA obtains an increase of \$50M for the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund Authorization.
- 2002** The first 15-year BPOU project agreement is executed.
- 2000** H.R. 910 Established the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund.
- 1999** WQA spearheads legislation for \$75 million in federal funding.
- 1995** WQA's first treatment facility is completed in Monrovia.
- 1994** WQA adopts a consensus approach to integrating water supply and cleanup programs.
- 1993** WQA is established by the California State legislature.
- 1983** The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) declares four Superfund sites in portions of the Main San Gabriel Basin.
- 1979** Groundwater contamination is first detected in the San Gabriel Groundwater Basin.



# Technology Advancements and Expanded Treatment Areas Propel Cleanup Forward

**T**he WQA coordinates groundwater cleanup across six operable units (OUs) in the San Gabriel Basin. These six areas are: Area Three Operable Unit (ATOU); Baldwin Park Operable Unit (BPOU); El Monte Operable Unit (EMOU); Puente Valley Operable Unit (PVOU); South El Monte Operable Unit (SEMOU); and Whittier Narrows Operable Unit (WNOU). The largest in geographic size and most significant in terms of the severity of contamination is the BPOU. Progress continues in all the OUs with significant new developments in the PVOU and EMOU.

### PUENTE VALLEY OPERABLE UNIT

#### Treatment Plant Construction Continues

Construction activities on the intermediate zone remedy finished in 2022. Startup testing activities began in early 2022. Northrop Grumman has made tremendous gains in construction activities associated with the shallow zone south remedy. Two extraction wells have been installed and construction of the treatment facility is underway. La Puente Valley County Water District will operate the intermediate zone remedy treatment plant and distribute the treated water to its customers.

As of June 30, 2022, other PVOU facilities including San Gabriel Valley Water Company Plant's B7 and B11 have treated more than 98,558 acre-feet of water and removed approximately 5,347 lbs. of VOCs.



*PVOU Treatment Facility*

#### Carrier Reengages in Shallow Zone Remediation

Carrier is responsible for shallow zone north remedy and continues to make progress. Activities include the installation of additional monitoring to delineate and characterize the current extent of the groundwater contamination. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issued an Explanation of Significant Differences in 2022 that allows Carrier to re-inject the treated water as a discharge option. This new discharge option significantly reducing the overall remedy costs. It is anticipated that Carrier will start the Remedial Design of the shallow zone north remedy in 2023. WQA will continue to help facilitate and coordinated with state and federal agencies to ensure shallow zone remediate stays on track.



*South Pasadena  
Wilson Treatment Facility*

### AREA THREE OPERABLE UNIT

#### Treatment Expansion

In 2022, the City of South Pasadena continues to operate its Wilson Treatment Facility and recently finished construction of its Graves Treatment Facility. The City of Alhambra continues to operate its water treatment facilities. USEPA is finishing an investigation on the extent of groundwater contamination for Area 3. A report on the investigation will be published in 2023.

As of June 30, 2022, the ATOU facilities have treated more than 52,732 acre-feet of water and removed approximately 2,285 lbs. of VOCs.



*City of South Pasadena  
Graves Treatment Facility*

## **BALDWIN PARK OPERABLE UNIT**

### **Enhancements Continue**

Coming up on halfway through a historic 10-year agreement to clean up contaminants in the BPOU, WQA reports continued success. The five treatment plants continue to operate. Recently, the San Gabriel Valley Water Company finished construction of a more efficient 3rd generation advanced oxidation treatment equipment utilizing ultra-violet (UV) light technology at its Baldwin Park Plant B6. The new treatment completed the Division of Drinking Water required testing and has been approved as treatment technology for the destruction of 1,4-Dioxane and NDMA. The cost of the demonstration project was funded via a State Water Resources Control Board Proposition 1 Planning Grant.

The BPOU facilities have treated 1,019,805 acre-feet of water and removed approximately 121,333 lbs. of VOCs as of June 30, 2022.

## **EL MONTE OPERABLE UNIT**

### **Investigations and Enhancements Underway**

The parties responsible for westside shallow zone remedy have constructed additional extraction wells to enhance containment of the contaminant plume and are working closely with USEPA to ensure compliance. Work is underway on further remedy enhancements for the intermediate zone remedy to ensure compliance. In addition, an EMOU stakeholder sub-group has been formed to work in conjunction with local regulators to formally track the progress of site cleanup activities at known source properties within the OU. The City of El Monte continues to operate a series of wells and treatment facilities built with the assistance of WQA federal funds. It is treating water from El Monte and Rosemead.

The EMOU facilities have treated 78,628 acre-feet of water as of June 30, 2022 and removed approximately 2,695 lbs. of VOCs.

## **SOUTH EL MONTE OPERABLE UNIT**

### **Partnerships Showing Progress**

In 2022, WQA utilized a Proposition 1 Grant to conduct expanded site investigation activities upgradient of the Whitmore Street Groundwater Remediation Facility. Based on the results, WQA may submit an additional application for future Proposition 1 funding to enhance current extraction in and around the WSGRF. In addition, WQA in partnership with the local Regional Water Quality Control Board was awarded an additional Prop. 1 grant in the amount of \$2,000,000 to conduct regional site investigations within the SEMOU at 12 high priority properties. WQA has completed the investigation at the five sites. As of June 30, 2022, the SEMOU facilities have treated more than 252,518 acre-feet and removed approximately 30,847 lbs. of VOCs.

## **WHITTIER NARROWS OPERABLE UNIT**

### **Public/Private Partnerships**

The Department of Toxic Substances Control continues progress on the required infrastructure to return the WNOU intermediate zone remedy back into a potable water supply project. The project is funded via public and private partnerships included Proposition 1 Grant funds.

The WNOU facilities have treated 94,060 acre-feet of water and removed approximately 3,507 lbs. of VOCs as of June 30, 2022.





*PVOU Shallow Zone South Remedy*

The San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority extends its sincere gratitude to the hundreds of on-site and remote operators who kept 33 treatment plants running. Safety and wellness measures were implemented efficiently and followed properly to ensure safe workplaces for all. Operators and staff members, alike, pivoted seamlessly to ensure progress was not lost in the ongoing Basin cleanup.

***Thank you to all!***



*PVOU Shallow Zone South Remedy*



*SEMOU Site Investigation*



# Long Wait for Federal Dollars Ends

**A** bright spot in our ongoing quest for funding, was the allocation of \$10 million via the federal San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund. This money in the Congressional omnibus bill, comes after more than a decade without federal funds after the ban on “earmarks” was lifted in 2021. Congress has authorized \$125 million to WQA and we have been allocated \$80.5 million dollars. The remaining \$44.5 million is needed to complete the task of operating existing facilities as well as cleaning up the many sites that have been identified as potential pollution sites in the valley. We are already working on our 2023 Restoration Fund request.

### Seeking to Extend Life of WQA

In addition to funding, WQA is seeking to extend its sunset date to 2050 in order to fulfill cleanup obligations. The WQA was established by the State Legislature on February 11, 1993, to develop, finance, and implement groundwater treatment programs in the San Gabriel Basin. WQA’s life was extended once to 2030, but project agreements and financing now extend beyond 2030. Furthermore, the discovery of emerging contaminants illustrates the need for the agency.

### Keeping Assessment Stable

California State Proposition 1 funds have made it possible to investigate 12 high-priority sites and Proposition 68 funds continue to be used to operate a number of treatment plants in the Basin. This state and federal funding keeps down the burden on local ratepayers. We did not raise the prescriptive pumping rights assessment this fiscal year. The WQA held the assessment at \$12 per acre-foot of pumping right. The WQA Enabling Act – Section 605 grants the ability to impose an annual pumping right assessment on prescriptive pumping rights. There are 197,610 acre feet of prescriptive pumping rights in the Main San Gabriel Basin.



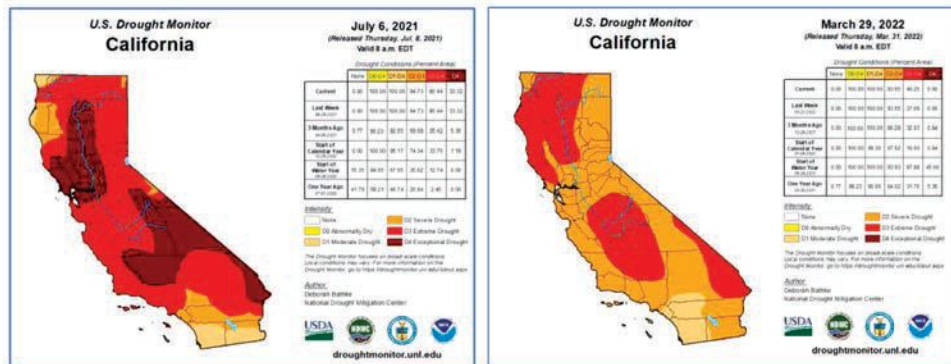


## New Webinars Educate Stakeholders

The WQA introduced several webinars to educate and inform both city and water industry officials this fiscal year. The webinars were well-attended and provided timely and useful information

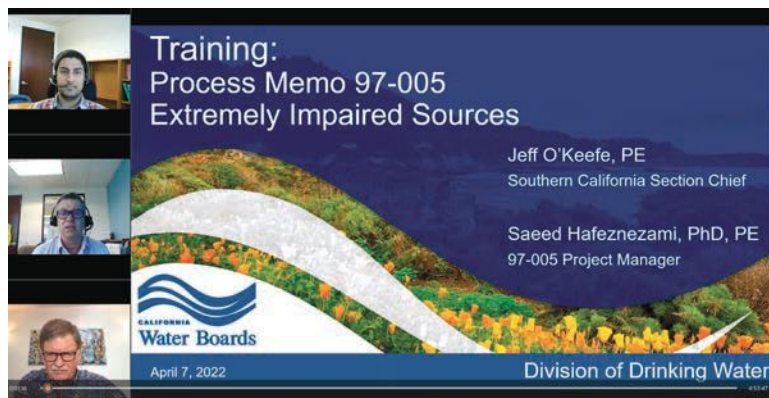
### Drought and New Supplies

- Drought increases need for new supplies



### Training for Permitting of Extremely Impaired Sources

After partnering with the State Water Control Board Division of Drinking Water (DDW) and the Coalition for Environmental Protection Restoration and Development (CEPRD) on the completion of the Process Memo 97-005 User Guide (revised in 2020), WQA once again collaborated with its partners to produce a training webinar to guide water suppliers, technical consultants and responsible parties through the process. The training webinar was also utilized in-house for state regulatory staff from DDW, the Regional Water Boards and the Department of Toxic Substances Control.



The webinar guides attendees through the steps required for a water supplier to obtain a water supply permit for wells that are determined to be highly impacted from contaminants. The process is typically lengthy and involves numerous studies and analyses that are submitted to DDW for review. The training helps those desiring to obtain a water supply permit under Process Memo 97-005 to manage submittal expectations to facilitate efficient implementation of the process.

WQA hosted a training webinar on April 7, 2022, that was attended by 136 water producers and attorneys. Attendees received a certificate for four contact hours.

Panelists gave a step-by-step review of the 97-005 permitting process, discussed related regulations and processes, along with the presentation of several case studies. The April session was led by Jeff O'Keefe, P.E., DDW Southern California Section Chief, and Saeed Hafeznezhani, DDW 97-005 Project Manager. More than a half dozen other panelists participated as well including WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman.

The 97-005 User Guide, produced as a public service by the CEPRD, acknowledges both current WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman and former WQA Executive Director Ken Manning for their efforts. The guide was developed in partnership with DDW, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin Corporation, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, and Orange County Water District.



# COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

## WQA addresses the larger-scale issues of groundwater cleanup

- Advocate for the San Gabriel Valley cleanup
- Provide state and federal funding
- Communicating a message to all valley residents
- Providing technical oversight for the cleanup

## In progress - Cities Receiving Prop 68 Grants\*



• Alhambra	\$5.1M
• Arcadia	\$2.3M
• El Monte	\$3.7M
• Monterey Park	\$7.8M
• Monrovia	\$6.7M
• South Pasadena	\$2.3M

## Informational Sessions for City Officials

In February and June, WQA hosted informational webinars for San Gabriel Valley city leaders. About 20 elected city officials and respective public works representatives attended the online events.

During these webinars, Schoellerman explained the groundwater treatment process in the San Gabriel Basin, using maps and aerial photos. He also discussed WQA's important role in the cleanup, the regulatory process and provided funding updates. The webinars highlighted the cities currently receiving State Prop. 68 funds and recent federal funding opportunities that will help to continue the cleanup and keep the burden off ratepayers.

"As we look to extend the life of the WQA and secure additional funding, the support of our cities is paramount. These webinars keep them informed and give them a chance to ask questions of us," said Schoellerman.

WQA will continue to offer both the 97-005 training and timely webinars for city officials. For more information, go to our website and subscribe for updates.

## Making and Keeping Connections

The WQA is staying connected to the communities and people we serve. Our website features up-to-date information in an easy-to-navigate format with the added ability to subscribe for updates. We have also bolstered our social media presence across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We are using these platforms to inform the public and highlight sponsored accomplishments. This community outreach is vital to our continued success as it aids efforts to secure more state and federal funding.

WQA also informs the general public about the ongoing cleanup effort through a variety of means throughout the year:

- Advertorials on WQA progress and happenings are distributed via special sections in area newspapers that reach more than 200,000 readers.
- Spanish and Chinese advertorials are also run in various newspapers.
- Joint sponsorship of the San Gabriel Valley Water Forum.
- Sponsors EcoVoices, an award-winning water science curriculum offered to area K-12 students.



## California Law Extends Life of Water Quality Authority Until 2050

There is still work to be done. This is the consensus of the California legislature, which recently extended the life of the WQA to July 1, 2050.

"We are pleased that the legislature recognized the broad support for the agency's mission. Prior legislation extended to July 1, 2025. But we have more work to do. We need to continue cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin. We need to continue cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin. We need to continue cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin."

The WQA was established by the State Legislature on February 11, 1992, to develop, finance, and implement groundwater treatment programs in the San Gabriel Basin. The San Gabriel Basin is the primary source of drinking water for more than 4.5 million people in Alhambra, Arcadia, La Puente, Rosemead, Azusa, San Gabriel, City of Industry, El Monte, South El Monte, West Covina and other communities in the San Gabriel Valley.

This legislation will allow the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority to continue its mission of cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin and protecting the drinking water supply for the region until 2050.



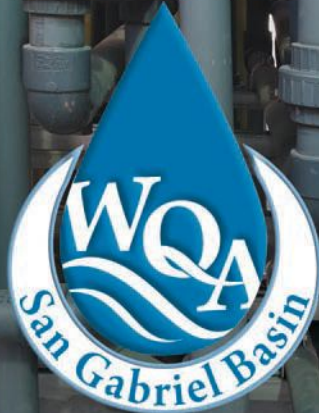
In 1970, industrial solvents and other contaminants were identified as groundwater in the San Gabriel Valley. The concentration of the solvents is believed to be the result of decades of improper chemical handling and disposal practices. As a result, water supplies had to be given with great caution to the residents of the San Gabriel Valley. The WQA was created to manage and coordinate the cleanup of the San Gabriel Basin, and to provide technical oversight for the cleanup.

The cleanup process has been slow and costly. It has taken more than 40 years to clean up the San Gabriel Basin. The WQA has been successful in cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin, but there is still work to be done. The WQA has been successful in cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin, but there is still work to be done.

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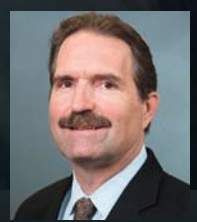
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Executive Director