

San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority Awards Federal Funds

Vital Groundwater Cleanup Continues as More Money is Sought

By Elizabeth Smilor
Special Sections Writer



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Mark Paulson
WQA Board Chairman

The San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (WQA) awarded two \$10 million federal allocations to 17 diverse and vital projects in the ongoing cleanup of the San Gabriel groundwater basin. The allocations were made on Dec. 21, 2022 and Feb. 22, 2023.

"The WQA has dispersed the federal funds in a way that addresses the varied and emerging issues we face in the long-term cleanup of the basin. We are thankful for the support of our legislators in Washington, D.C. and will continue to work with them to bring in additional funding to accomplish our mission," said WQA Board Chairman Mark Paulson. "The WQA will continue to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for the residents of the San Gabriel Valley."



Grace Napolitano

The WQA was established by the State Legislature in 1993 to develop, finance, and implement groundwater treatment programs in the San Gabriel Basin after contaminants were identified in the late 1970s. The San Gabriel Basin is the primary source of drinking water for more than 1.4 million people.

"Each one of my constituents should have safe clean drinking water," said U.S. Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, whose 31st District covers much of the San Gabriel Valley. "The San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority was created to coordinate the cleanup of this important water source and must continue to receive funds moving forward."

The federal funds were appropriated into the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund) following more than a decade without federal funds. The WQA Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the leadership of Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla and Representatives Grace Napolitano and Judy Chu in advocating for the funding. Congress has authorized \$125 million for the Restoration Fund, of which \$94.5 million has been appropriated and allocated to cleanup projects by the WQA.

"When we opened up the initial round of funding, the applications we received totaled more than \$200 million in capital projects," said WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman. "That demonstrated to us that there is substantial need for additional funding in the San Gabriel Valley for cleanup and therefore we already are pursuing more funds."

"It's absolutely vital to California's future and our families' health that we have a safe and sustainable drinking water source."

Judy Chu
U.S. Congresswoman

The WQA received 23 applications for a combined capital cost of \$201 million. The projects awarded address a wide spectrum of contamination issues including five PFAS (Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances) treatment projects and four VOC (volatile organic compounds) treatment projects.

There are 33 active groundwater treatment plants in the San Gabriel Basin. The WQA has coordinated cleanup efforts that have resulted in the treatment of more than 1.9 million acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is equal to 325,551 gallons. Though variable, about 200,000 acre-feet of water is pumped from the Basin annually and used as domestic supply.

The emergence of PFAS, a group of more than 4,000 synthetic harmful chemical compounds, has increased the anticipated time and cost of the cleanup. On March 14, the U.S. EPA announced the proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation, which would establish legally enforceable levels called Maximum Contaminant Levels for six PFAS in drinking water.

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Grace Napolitano
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Judy Chu



Since 1993, the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority has coordinated cleanup efforts in the Basin to supply clean water, shown in spreading basins at far left, to more than 1.4 million people. There are now 33 active groundwater treatment plants, like the ones shown at left and above, and more than 100 tons of contaminants have been removed.

"I am proud to have worked to secure \$20 million in federal funding for the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund to improve the stability and reliability of safe drinking water for communities across the region, and I will continue to work to bring additional resources that invest in our water infrastructure and ensure a clean water basin for the region."

Alex Padilla
U.S. Senator

A WQA legal team consisting of five law firms from around the country filed a lawsuit on March 17 against DuPont, 3M and other companies in U.S. District Court, District of South Carolina, seeking to recover the agency's costs of cleaning up PFAS from the Main San Gabriel Basin.

"Our agency is responsible for overseeing the cleanup and restoration of the groundwater Basin," said Schoellerman in announcing the lawsuit. "The Basin has been impacted by PFAS detected in numerous wells requiring the construction of additional treatment systems. Ongoing remediation costs associated with the PFAS contamination will continue

"I am especially proud to have secured \$20 million in Community Project Funding over the past two years for the San Gabriel Valley Water Quality Authority to clean up the San Gabriel Basin," said Congresswoman Judy Chu, who represents the 28th District covering much of the western San Gabriel Valley. "It's absolutely vital to California's future and our families' health that we have a safe and sustainable drinking water source."

In addition to seeking federal and state funding for the cleanup, the WQA garners funds from the parties responsible for the groundwater contamination. This funding helps to lessen the burden on local



Alex Padilla

for decades. It is part of our mission to pursue responsible parties for those costs."

PFAS, considered "forever" chemicals because they remain in the environment, were compounds produced mainly by the 3M and DuPont companies and used by them and a variety of other manufacturers to produce everything from Teflon for pots and pans to Scotchgard for fabric protection.

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The California Legislature has extended the life of the WQA to July 1, 2050. The WQA continues to approach each day as Earth Day in fulfilling its mission to ensure a safe, clean and reliable drinking water supply in the San Gabriel Valley. ○

Learn how the WQA is keeping your water safe and clean at www.wqa.com.



Water Quality Authority

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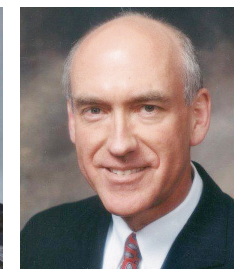
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