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SAN GABRIEL VALLEY, LOS ANGELES AND SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY EDITION

2023

SGV Water Managers: Drought Deficit Declining

LACSD Celebrates 100 Years of Service

Metropolitan CEO Speaks at Three Valleys MWD Event

WQA Addresses PFAS in Groundwater



DIGITAL EDITION

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Water Agencies Show Power of Collaboration

elcome to the Fall issue of California Water, where we focus on the vast San Gabriel Valley and its pivotal role in the world of Southern California water. This region's unique geography, cultural diversity, and history make it a focal point for water resource standards, showcasing cooperative efforts between agencies.



Within these pages, you'll discover the power of collaboration. Partnerships between agencies are deemed essential as they work tirelessly to maintain water standards and use every available tool to protect groundwater sources, capture rainfall, and encourage efficient water use. The San Gabriel Valley serves as a shining example of innovation and adaptability in the face of evolving water challenges.

Charley Wilson

This issue ventures deep into the valley to bring you stories of next-generation water planning. We explore cuttingedge conservation methods, the new infrastructure being built today to connect the area to other water sources, and the importance of equitable access to clean water. These pages are filled with inspiring stories of local agencies doing visionary work.

The local and regional water agencies are there to lead and educate all users as we cycle through dry and wet years. This publication delivers their messages to guide us today and into the future. We believe knowledge drives positive change, and we're committed to delivering stories that inform and empower.

Thank you for your support and dedication to water conservation. Together, we can ensure a flourishing future for the San Gabriel Valley and all of California.

Charley Wilson Executive Director

The Southern California Water Coalition, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public education partnership is dedicated to informing Southern Californians about our water needs and our state's water resources.





Snow runoff flows from underneath the snowpack near the California Department of Water Resources snow survey site at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Photo taken May 1. Photo courtesy of Fred Greaves / California Department of Water Resources

More Water ... Still Not Enough San Gabriel Valley Water Managers: Drought Deficit Declining

By Elizabeth Smilor

Special Sections Writer

irst came the winter rainfall, then came the windfall: A 100 percent allocation of imported water from the State Water Project to regional
 water agencies. Now, groundwater basins and reservoirs are filling up.

"It's a 'good problem' to have – when we have surplus supplies, the ability to store all of the imported water available is limited by physical

and geographical constraints," said Three Valleys Municipal Water District General Manager and Chief Engineer Matt Litchfield, adding that a lack of surface storage is one constraint. "Another constraint is when local winter storms generate runoff that saturates groundwater recharge basins, lowering the ability and affecting the timing of delivery of imported water to the same groundwater basins for recharge."

The bottom line according the San Gabriel Valley

water managers is the region is well-suited to store every drop possible, and we will be better off at the start of the next drought. However, water use efficiency is always vital.

Publisher Chris Lancaster Editor Elizabeth Smilor Art Director Christie Robinson Contributors Charley Wilson Elizabeth Smilor

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For comments or questions, email Chris Lancaster at chris.lancaster@civicpub.com.

"It's a 'good problem' to have – when we have surplus supplies ..."

Matt Litchfield

Three Valleys Municipal Water District General Manager/Chief Engineer





At left, an aerial view shows high water conditions at Enterprise Bridge on Lake Oroville, which is the largest reservoir on the State Water Project. Above, a busy Bidwell Canyon Marina on Lake Oroville. These photos were taken July 3 and the lake was at 99 percent of the total capacity. In September 2021, Oroville dropped to a record low 24 percent capacity. *Photos courtesy of Florence Low*

Photos courtesy of Florence Low California Department of Water Resources

Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District General Manager Tom Love explained the unique aspects of water supply and storage in the Valley. The San Gabriel Watershed overlies

"This watershed is one of the best systems in the country for capturing stormwater for beneficial use."

Tom Love

Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District General Manager two of the largest groundwater basins in Southern California – the Central Groundwater Basin and the Main San Gabriel Groundwater Basin.

"This watershed is one of the best systems in the country for capturing stormwater for beneficial use," Love said. "The dams and spreading basins, owned and operated by Los Angeles County Flood Control, capture over 95 percent of the rainfall in the upper

Watershed to replenish the groundwater basins which supply 80 percent of the region's water needs."

Tom Love

Manager Darin Kasamoto points to other beneficial aspects

San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (SGVMWD) General

of the San Gabriel River watershed including major reservoirs upstream. "We have the opportunity to hold more water back in the mountains and release it at a time when we can take it. With the Los Angeles River there is not much upstream retention," said Kasamoto, adding that the spreading basins are another major advantage.

Saving Water for a Dry Day

Record-breaking rain and snow led the California Department of Water Resources that manages the State Water Project to increase the allocation to 100 percent in April for the first time in 17 years. The allocation during the extended drought had dropped as low as 5 percent.

Metropolitan Water District, which has 26 member agencies including Three Valleys and Upper District, receives that water and has to determine how to distribute it into reservoirs and groundwater basins. SGVMWD is one of 29 State Water

[See MORE WATER Page 4]





Darin Kasamoto



Randy Schoellerman



Adel Hagekhalil



Above, Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet, built in the 1990s, is Southern California's largest reservoir with a capacity of 810,000 acre-feet. Along with Metropolitan's other reserves, it holds enough water to meet Southern California's emergency and drought needs for six months. At right, Lake Mathews in southwest Riverside County is the terminal reservoir for the Colorado River Aqueduct and was built at the same time in the 1930s. It has a capacity of 182,000 acre-feet. Below right, Lake Skinner near Temecula, was completed in 1973 and feeds water to the Skinner treatment plant before it is delivered to Metropolitan's member agencies. It has a capacity of 44,000 acre-feet.

Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

[MORE WATER From Page 3]

Contractors, who receive water from the State Water Project. Three Valleys is a water wholesaler with 13 members in the San Gabriel Valley, Upper District serves 18 cities and portions of

"We have the opportunity to hold more water back in the mountains and release it at a time when we can take it. With the Los Angeles River there is not much upstream retention."

Darin Kasamoto San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District General Manager unincorporated Los Angeles County, and SGVMWD provides supplemental water from the SWP for the communities of Alhambra, Azusa, Monterey Park and Sierra Madre.

"While this year's above average rainfall helped recover our local groundwater supplies the basin is not full," said Love, from Upper District. "We are now moving as much water from the State Water Project as possible into the groundwater basin. This delivery will continue until early 2024 or later if local conditions remain dry."

According to the San Gabriel Basin Watermaster the Basin's key well level was 227 feet on Sept. 22. The historic high was 295.30 feet on July 20, 1983 and the historic low was 169.4 feet on Nov. 21, 2018.







A windy stretch of the East Branch California Aqueduct in Palmdale on May 12. The aqueduct brings water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to Southern California as part of the State Water Project.
Photo courtesy of the California Department of Water Resources

"The higher the groundwater, the more productive the wells are and it's cheaper. The optimal range is 200-250 feet. We're in the middle of that range. So, we're in good shape. I wouldn't say

"The area is fortunate to have this massive groundwater basin, ... WQA was formed in 1993 to coordinate the cleanup and we continue to do that."

Randy Schoellerman WQA Executive Director

we're in great shape, said SGVMWD's Kasamoto. "Without local rainfall, the level will fall. The imported water is not enough to raise the level. It will continue to drop slowly until winter."

For its part the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority is ensuring a clean Basin. "The area is fortunate to have this massive groundwater basin, so when contamination was discovered in

coordinate the cleanup and we continue to do that," said WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman.

On the larger regional front, Metropolitan General Manager Adel Hagekhalil points to Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet as a valuable regional storage asset. The reservoir, developed by Metropolitan in the late 1990s, holds up to 810,000 acre-feet of water, which is equal to a six-month emergency supply. The lake is now at capacity after being partially depleted during the drought. Metropolitan is constructing pump stations and other infrastructure to move water from Diamond Valley Lake to the San Gabriel Valley and other areas without access to local storage. These conveyance facilities are scheduled to be online by late 2025.

"Regionally, additional groundwater storage programs need to be developed to capture and store imported water during surplus conditions such as what we are experiencing now with a 100 percent SWP allocation," said TVMWD's Litchfield. "State-wide, large-scale, generational investments also need to occur, such as the Sites reservoir project, which is slated to store up to 1.5 million acre-feet in an off-stream reservoir."

The San Gabriel Valley agencies also support investments in long-term projects including Pure Water Southern California, which would be the nation's largest water recycling facility, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta Conveyance, a proposed tunnel under the Delta. Metropolitan and the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts are developing Pure Water jointly and the highly purified recycled water could reach select customers as early as 2028 with full operation planned for 2032.

[See MORE WATER Page 6]



The Santa Fe Spreading Grounds are operated and maintained by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. Water percolates into the Main San Gabriel groundwater basin through the spreading grounds, which are located near the interchange of the 210 and 605 interstates.

[MORE WATER From Page 5]

Using Water Wisely

More storage, better conveyance and new sources of local water will make the region better prepared for the next drought cycle, but the final piece of the puzzle will always be conservation, the water managers agree.

"I believe in the three I's – Integration, Innovation and Inclusion. Those are the things that can really move us forward."

Adel Hagekhalil Metropolitan General Manager

"Our message continues to be 'Water Use Efficiency.' Our communities have done a tremendous job reducing their water use and they continue to do so," said Love. "Since we are still trying to fill our local groundwater basin, every drop of water not used will be available to meet our needs during the next dry period."

Litchfield says extreme and variable weather is the region's reality. "We have to continually adapt how we manage, plan and invest in our water systems for long-term resiliency," he said. "Water efficiency needs to be a way of life in Southern California – we must keep using water wisely and conserving in our homes, gardens, businesses, and communities. Metropolitan Water District, Three Valleys and local water agencies are here to help with rebates, classes and water saving tips."

The water managers encourage residents to reach out to their local agency for rebate and conservation information. Kasamoto

said SGVMWD is always looking at ways to help people save water and pointed to how the agency helped some schools improve their stormwater capture.

"Anything we can do on a small scale is beneficial to the big picture. We're always going to stress the need for conservation even in wet times," said Kasamoto. "The bottom line is that the groundwater table has been in a downward trend for 40 years. We use more water than we can replace."

The local agencies are working together to better convey messages and conservation news and opportunities to the public to avoid confusion. In all that the water agencies do in both dry and wet years, partnership is vital.

"I believe in the three I's – Integration, Innovation and Inclusion. Those are the things that can really move us forward," said Hagekhalil. "Partnership is so critical. We can't do this alone. All of our member agencies are part of the solution, as are the chambers of commerce, water masters and land developers."

Litchfield agrees that cooperation is vital to progress.

"To tackle the changing conditions and continue to maintain the standard for water resources, it's an all-hands-on-deck, use-all-the-tools approach – build partnerships to have more interconnections amongst water agencies, provide water treatment, increase water storage, and continue to use water wisely to preserve the standards for our future generations." O



For Our Water: Taking Action Together

To Learn the Story of Our Groundwater, Visit: thewatersthatconnectus.com



From Soaked to Sizzle!

What To Know About The Rain And Snow

When we entered 2023, we had more than a decade of mostly dry and drought conditions and our groundwater was nearing historic low levels. Even with this year's rain and snow, we're still in a drought cycle where we are recovering from the last drought before the next one begins.



Basin Levels and Drought Conditions (2012–2023)

We Have To Be Ready For Challenges

Our ongoing challenge is that dry conditions are the norm (orange and red bars in the chart) and cause our water levels to be drawn down (blue line showing water levels). This year's rain and snow brought new challenges like flooding. The bottom line: our groundwater is not quite midpoint between its historic low and high levels. It's not fully recovered from the series of droughts we've had.

Resilience Comes From Working Together

Recovering from one drought and being ready for the next depends on us working together. We thank our partners for working with us to capture stormwater and move it into our groundwater basin. And we invite all 1.5 million of us in the San Gabriel Valley to use water wisely as a way of life. It is a precious resource we all need to protect.



Metropolitan General Manager Encourages Collaboration Adel Hagekhalil Is Keynote Speaker at Three Valleys Leadership Breakfast





"We have to all come together to plan for the future and respond to the changes in our water supply."

Adel Hagekhalil General Manager/CEO Metropolitan Water District of Southern California



"We need to adapt to this climate whiplash and we need to plan for extremes," said Hagekhalil. "We need to build resilience and reliability for everyone with no one left

behind. We have to all come together to plan for the future and respond to the changes in our water supply."

More than 100 guests attended the breakfast that was held June 29th at Mountain Meadows Golf Course in Pomona. Attendees included water industry leaders and municipal officials, as well as a representative from California Assembly Member Blanca Rubio's office. The Three Valleys Board of Directors and staff members appreciated Hagekhalil's willingness to present and talk with leaders at the breakfast.

"As a region, if we're going to be successful, we have no choice but to work together towards a common goal of ensuring a sustainable water supply," said Three Valleys Director David De Jesus, who also sits on the Metropolitan board. "The concept proposed by Adel (Hagekhalil) at the leadership breakfast is indicative of the type of attitude and commitment that is going to be required to accomplish such a challenging goal as we see our climate take on a new look. If we can set aside differences and focus on water supply, we will be successful."

Metropolitan is the nation's largest wholesale water supplier with 26 member water agencies, including Three Valleys, a wholesaler for 13 retail agency customers. In his presentation, Hagekhalil discussed the challenges brought on by climate change weather extremes that affect supply from both the State Water Project and the Colorado River. He provided updates on many regional investments and solutions, including stormwater capture and storage, conservation and the Pure Water Southern California recycled water project.

"The presentation by Adel (Hagekhalil) really demonstrates our region's commitment to developing more water supply and our commitment to ongoing water conservation. As a member agency, we are 100 percent behind Metropolitan," said Three Valleys General Manager and Chief Engineer Matt Litchfield. "At Three Valleys, we do think the State of California needs to do more on their end to develop more supplies and store more water. That is our opinion, because we're doing our part down here. We are putting our money where our mouth is."



Municipal and water industry leaders listen to Metropolitan CEO Adel Hagekhalil at the Three Valleys Municipal Water District Leadership Breakfast, far left, at Mountain Meadows Golf Course in Pomona. Above, Three Valleys Board of Directors, from left, Director David De Jesus, Vice President Mike Ti, President Jody Roberto, Hagekhalil, Director Jeff Hanlon and Secretary Carlos Goytia. At right from the top: De Jesus, Hagekhalil and Three Valleys General Manager and Chief Engineer Matt Litchfield; Covina Councilmember and Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Assistant General Manager Patty Cortez and San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority Public Outreach Coordinator Stephanie Moreno; La Verne City Councilmember Tim Hepburn, La Verne Public Works Director Meg McWade, Claremont Councilmember Corey Calaycay and Three Valleys Director Hanlon.

Hagekhalil highlighted Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet as a regional success story. The reservoir was developed by Metropolitan in the late 1990s and holds up to 810,000 acre-feet of water, which is equal to a six-month emergency supply. The lake was recently filled after it was partially depleted during three years of drought.

"Storage is going to be a key element. Storage is our savings account," said Hagekhalil. "Our groundwater basins have the capacity for more water. So, the question is how we can reach agreements, to put more water in, when we have it. We need to take individual hats off and put on regional hats."

"Water doesn't stop, there are no boundaries, so we have to work together."

Jody Roberto Three Valleys Board President Three Valleys Board President Jody Roberto reiterated Metropolitan's One Water approach to ensure all water is valued and none wasted. "I love that (Hagekhalil) is collaborating with all of the member agencies to work together to make sure that they're on the same page. Water doesn't stop, there are no boundaries, so we have to work together," she said.

A major piece of the regional water supply portfolio is Pure Water Southern California, a joint project of Metropolitan and the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts. Upon completion, the

advanced water purification facility in Carson will produce up to 150,000 million gallons of water daily or enough for 1.5 million people. Hagekhalil shared that the goal is to start delivering water near Carson by 2028 or 2029, before the scheduled 2032 startup. He also shared funding updates, project progress and plans to fill 50,000 jobs.

On the conservation front, Hagekhalil said Metropolitan is co-sponsoring Assembly Bill 1572 that would prohibit the use of potable water on nonfunctional turf, which he defined as that which is "only used by those mowing it, not turf used otherwise by people and animals." He said Metropolitan recently received \$30 million from the California Department of Water Resources to replace nonfunctional turf with drought-tolerant plants. Conservation will continue to be important and he said he recognizes the effort of agencies and customers to cut back water usage.

"My takeaway from Adel Hagekhalil's comments is that in order to address the challenges and implement solutions to assure water reliability in an increasingly variable climate, we need to collaborate and work together as a region to be successful," said Upper San Gabriel







Valley Municipal Water District General Manager Tom Love. Upper District is also a Metropolitan member agency.

Hagekhalil invited agencies to participate in Metropolitan's development of a Climate Adaptation Master Plan and its 25-year agenda and goals.

"I want to thank all the partners. Our job is to work together to conserve, but also open our minds to find new ways to store water, new ways to partner and new ways to pay for the large investments," said Hagekhalil. "We can't do it alone. Metropolitan doesn't exist without its member agencies and without the people that we serve." O



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San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority Addressing PFAS to Continue Safeguarding Groundwater

By Elizabeth Smilor Special Sections Writer

"Our agency is responsible for overseeing the cleanup and restoration of the groundwater Basin. The Basin has been impacted by PFAS detected in numerous wells requiring the construction of additional treatment systems."

Randy Schoellerman WQA Executive Director ike the regional water agencies, the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority is excited to see more water flowing through the spreading basins and into the groundwater Basin. The WQA also is steadfast in its commitment to coordinate efforts to clean up the Basin to ensure clean, safe drinking water.

That job is now more vital, time-consuming and costly due to emerging contaminants including PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) widely used long-lasting chemicals that break down very slowly.

"Our agency is responsible for overseeing the cleanup and restoration of the groundwater Basin," said WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman. "The Basin has been impacted by PFAS detected in numerous wells requiring the construction of additional treatment systems."

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 compounds in drinking water.

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.

On March 17, the WQA filed a lawsuit against 3M, DuPont and other companies seeking to recover the costs of cleaning up PFAS from the Main San Gabriel Basin.

"Ongoing remediation costs associated with the PFAS contamination will continue for decades," Schoellerman said. "It is part of our mission to pursue responsible parties for those costs."

"The WQA will continue to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for the residents of the San Gabriel Valley."

Mark Paulson WQA Board Chairman

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.

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 nearly 2 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 WQA lawsuit becomes one of hundreds of similar lawsuits filed by cities, states, water agencies and others in the last several years. It alleges the defendants knowingly contaminated drinking water over a period of years in the Basin (and across the country) as a result of the manufacture and use of a group of more than 4,000 synthetic harmful chemical compounds, collectively known as PFAS.

Judy Chu

"We are taking this action so that San Gabriel Valley residents are not burdened with the additional cost of the PFAS cleanup," said WQA Board Chairman Mark Paulson. "The WQA remains committed to holding those responsible for the contamination accountable. The WQA will continue to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for the residents of the San Gabriel Valley."

"The WQA is critically important to the future of the San Gabriel Valley because it is cleaning up the water in the very important water basin."

Judy Chu U.S. Congresswoman

In addition to pursuing funds from responsible parties, the WQA receives funding from the state and federal governments. For a second consecutive year, the WQA received \$10 million in federal funding. The federal funds were appropriated into the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund) following more than a decade without federal funds. 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.

"The WQA is critically important to the future of the San Gabriel Valley because it is cleaning up the water in the very important

water basin. The San Gabriel Basin is a huge asset that was contaminated by the industries of the past," said Congresswoman Judy Chu, whose 28th District includes parts of the San Gabriel Valley, including Alhambra, Monterey Park, Rosemead, San Gabriel, Pasadena and Claremont. "The WQA has been able to get funds from the polluters and the state. It was a long time coming to get federal funds."



The WQA is currently pursuing additional federal funds for fiscal year 2024. This funding helps the WQA leverage funding from the state and lessens the burden on local ratepayers.

"Without the WQA, this cleanup wouldn't have come this far. They've helped tremendously in remediating the San Gabriel Basin that provides 90 percent of water to 1.4 million people downstream, of which more than 400,000 are in

Grace Napolitano

disadvantaged communities. Clean water is important for them," said Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, whose 31st District covers much of the San Gabriel Valley from Monrovia to La Verne to La Puente.

The vital role of the WQA was also reinforced by the decision of the California State Legislature in 2022 to extend the life of the Authority to July 1, 2050. Prior legislation extended the WQA to July 1, 2030, but local stakeholders advocated for the extension because certain financing and projects agreements go beyond 2030.

"Without the WQA. this cleanup wouldn't have come this far. They've helped tremendously in remediating the San Gabriel Basin ..."

Grace Napolitano U.S. Congresswoman

"Our coordination of this cleanup has made a difference in protecting this vital groundwater basin and

our efforts will continue for decades more to ensure a clean, safe and reliable regional water supply," said Schoellerman. O

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





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CalEPA Secretary Yana Garcia Focused on Climate Resiliency

By Elizabeth Smilor Special Sections Writer

"I envision climate resiliency as a state of being in which Californians can feel safe in the environment that surrounds them."

Yana Garcia CalEPA Secretary hen Yana Garcia was named Secretary of California's Environmental Protection Agency over a year ago, the state was in the midst of a historic drought. Today, our reservoirs are full and water restrictions have been eased some.

Needless to say, climate and water supply resiliency are top of mind for the newest CalEPA Secretary.

"What we're seeing is that even our best models don't quite accurately predict the weather whiplash that we're experiencing. We're seeing hardship all across the board with floods and wildfires," said Garcia. "I envision climate resiliency as a state of being in which Californians can feel safe in the environment that surrounds them. That means that when we are facing wildfires, drought, floods and the like we are able to rapidly deploy emergency response and recovery resources that people can readily access and trust. It also means inherently that neither race nor income should determine relative access to that sense of safety and the ability to recover from increasingly frequent disasters."

60 YEARS of Water Recycling

Partially treated wastewater at Whittier. Narrows Water Reclamation Plant in 1962.

OVER 1 TRILLION GALLONS RECYCLED

In Los Angeles County, about half of our drinking water comes from wells pumping up groundwater and the remainder is imported from hundreds of miles away—from the Colorado River and Northern California. In 1962, our Whittier Narrows Water Reclamation Plant began producing recycledwater that is used to refill our groundwater basins. Since then, we have been recycling at 10 of our 11 wastewater treatment plants and, along with our water agency partners, have recycled over 1 trillion gallons. That's enough water to fill an 8-foot diameter pipe that circles the earth 23 times! This recycling reduces the need to import water and makes our region more sustainable.

Nonetheless, we are striving to do more. We have partnered with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California on a project to reuse the water from our 11th treatment plant. **This program could produce enough water for 1.5 million people, making it one of the world's largest water recycling efforts**.

For more info, contact us at info@lacsd.org or 562-908-4288, ext. 2300. For more on the new recycling project, visit www.mwdh2o.com/purewater.



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A 1928 photo of the Joint Disposal Plant (now known as the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant) in Carson.

> By Elizabeth Smilor Special Sections Writer

"In 2023, we are honored to be celebrating our centennial. The agency was formed on three pillars – regional governance, sound engineering and a focus on service."

Robert C. Ferrante L.A. County Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager. 2019-Present



he ceremonial shovel from the groundbreaking of Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts' first sewer, nearly 100 years ago, sits in the office of the agency's Chief Engineer and General Manager, Robert C. Ferrante. The shovel is a reminder of the Sanitation Districts' humble origin and long history, and the agency's essential role in the development of Los Angeles County.

"In 2023, we are honored to be celebrating our centennial," said Ferrante. "The agency was formed on three pillars – regional governance, sound engineering and a focus on service. Those three elements continue to work today."

For 100 years, the Sanitation Districts have been meeting the changing needs of their vast service area. From building wastewater and solid waste infrastructure to pioneering water reclamation and renewable energy production, the agency has grown and embraced innovation to serve 5.5 million residents in 78 cities and unincorporated portions of Los Angeles County.

"Protecting public health was our original priority, but through the years we've evolved to serve new community needs as they arose," Ferrante said. "Our history demonstrates that we are not a static agency, but a responsive one."

Formation in 1923

The concept of the Sanitation Districts originated in the minds of Albert Kendall Warren, Assemblymember Hugh Pomeroy, and County Board of Supervisors Chair R.F. McClellen. Warren developed the plan for a regional sewer system to serve Los Angeles County and was the Sanitation Districts' first Chief Engineer. In September 1925, the agency broke ground on its first sewer, the Wright Road Trunk Sewer, just north of Maywood. Today, the sewer system has grown to include over 1,400 miles of sewer throughout the county.

"That very first project demonstrated the importance of regional cooperation, had a solution grounded in sound engineering, and served the community by protecting public health," Ferrante said.

The Sanitation Districts' first sewage treatment plant, the Joint Disposal Plant (JDP), began operation on Feb. 4, 1928, processing two million gallons per day (mgd) of sewage. The flow into the plant increased to about 10 mgd in its first two years of operation and to 22 mgd by 1937. Today, the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant (JWPCP) is located on the site of the old JDP.

Recent Innovations

The JWPCP is host to major improvements and innovations. A key part of the Sanitation Districts' wastewater infrastructure is two tunnels that carry cleaned water six miles from the JWPCP to an ocean outfall system two miles offshore from Royal Palms Beach in San Pedro. These tunnels are over 60 and 80 years old and cannot be removed from service for inspection or repair. In 2019, after years of planning and environmental review, the agency began construction of the Clearwater Project to protect local waterways by addressing aging infrastructure. Utilizing a modern tunnel boring machine, the project will build a new seven-mile long, 18-foot internal diameter tunnel that will replace the two existing tunnels. The Clearwater Project is scheduled for completion in 2027.

"This project, despite being one of the most expensive construction projects ever undertaken by the Sanitation Districts, was fully supported by the Boards of Directors, which demonstrated their steadfast commitment to effective and reliable wastewater treatment," said Grace Hyde, who served as the Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager from 2012-2019. "The large, innovative projects that the Sanitation Districts have implemented throughout the years have, at their core, been a successful collaboration between the Districts' directors, committed staff and the communities that the agency serves each day." The Sanitation Districts are developing Pure Water Southern California in partnership with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California at the JWPCP. This program, now in the environmental planning phase, would purify the cleaned water

"The large, innovative projects that the Sanitation Districts have implemented throughout the years have, at their core, been a successful collaboration between the Districts' directors, committed staff and the communities that the agency serves each day."

Grace Hyde L.A. County Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager, 2012-2019 produced at the JWPCP and distribute that water across the region, primarily for groundwater replenishment. As proposed, the program would provide enough water for 1.5 million people and more than double the amount of water recycled by the Sanitation Districts. It would become one of the largest water recycling projects in the world.

"Pure Water Southern California is, by its nature, a regional project. It really demonstrates how regional collaboration continues to work,"

Ferrante said. "It's also our last untapped source of water to recycle. The project is a key part of our future, which is all about sustainability."

60 Years of Water Recycling

The JWPCP is the last untapped source, because of the Sanitation Districts' pioneering history in water reclamation and recycling. A 1949 Sanitation Districts' report on Water Reuse led to construction of several inland water reclamation plants to produce recycled water close to where water was needed.

[See L.A. COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICTS Page 18]

CHIEF ENGINEERS & GENERAL MANAGERS – PAST & PRESENT



Albert Kendall Warren 1925 – 1940



Charles W. Carry 1984 – 2000



A M Rawn 1940 – 1958



James F. Stahl 2000 – 2007



Charles R. Compton 1958 – 1961

Stephen R. Maguin

2007 - 2012



John D. Parkhurst 1961 – 1979



Grace R. Hyde 2012 – 2019



Walter E. Garrison 1979 – 1984



Robert C. Ferrante 2019 – Present





Above, the groundbreaking of the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts' first sewer on Wright Road in Maywood in 1925 with (from left to right) Assemblymember Hugh Pomeroy, County Board of Supervisors Chair R.F. McClellan with the ceremonial shovel, and LACSD Chief Engineer Albert Kendall Warren. On the left in the photo to the right, LACSD Assistant Chief Engineer A M Rawn, who would become the agency's Chief Engineer in 1940, inspects a tile-lined conduit leading to the Joint Disposal Plant in 1927 along with an unnamed newspaperman.



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The first of these plants, the Whittier Narrows Water Reclamation Plant, has been supplying high-quality recycled water for groundwater replenishment since 1962 and was designated a historic civil engineering landmark in 1972 by the American Society of Civil Engineers, L.A. Section. By 2022, the Sanitation Districts had produced over 1.2 trillion gallons of water that were beneficially reused.

"... I saw our program grow into the nation's largest recycled water program.

... the program cannot be overstated because it is providing a resource greatly needed during years of increasing droughts and climate change."

Grace Hyde

L.A. County Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager, 2012-2019 "During my career, I saw our program grow into the nation's largest recycled water program," said Hyde. "The importance of the program cannot be overstated because it is providing a resource greatly needed during years of increasing droughts and climate change."

"The Whittier Narrows WRP set the standard and paved a course for others across the country and world to follow," said Ferrante. "This project is referenced time and time again as the first building block to

the expansion and construction of other water reclamation plants modeled after it and to the system that we have today."

Converting Waste into Energy

The Sanitation Districts have also led the way in converting waste into energy. In 1971, the Sanitation Districts used gas from the Palos Verdes Landfill to run a generator and power a Christmas tree. This event received extensive media coverage — including a visit from then Prince Charles — and raised awareness of renewable energy. In 1987, the Sanitation Districts started operation of the Puente Hills Gas to Energy Facility. At its peak, this facility converted gas from the Puente Hills Landfill into enough electricity for 50,000 homes.

In 2016, California passed laws requiring cities to divert organic waste from landfills. To help member cities comply with these requirements, the Sanitation Districts developed a food waste recycling program that primarily uses existing infrastructure. As a result, this system was built quickly and provides low-cost service. The program produces green energy and nutrient-rich material that is converted into compost.

"We're a net reducer of greenhouse gas emissions. Our tagline is 'converting waste into resources' and that is our direction," Ferrante said. "Our goal is to keep reusing water and help make our community as sustainable as possible."

Focusing on Keeping Rates Affordable

"Implementing and operating environmentally judicious and economically prudent infrastructure was the paramount goal to



Clockwise from top left: The White Point tunnel was placed in operation in September 1937. Final inspection prior to use was made by (from left to right): District Counsel Hugh Gordon; District Chief Engineer A. K. Warren; Assistant Chief Engineer A M Rawn; an unknown man; Floyd Shoefner, tunnel contractor; an unknown man: and Charles T. Leeds, consulting engineer, Los Angeles. In 1971, a Christmas tree is illuminated for the media using gas from the Palos Verdes Landfill. Workers pour arch concrete in a tunnel in 1953. The Palos Verdes gas to energy facility in 1983.

"I was both proud and grateful to be part of an exemplar team of directors and staff dedicated to serving the wastewater and solid waste management needs of its customers."

James Stahl L.A. County Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager, 2000-2007 be met to the greatest degree possible," said James Stahl, who was the Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager from 2000-2007 and worked for the agency for almost 38 years. "I was both proud and grateful to be part of an exemplar team of directors and staff dedicated to serving the wastewater and solid waste management needs of its customers."

Through all the years of innovation and investments and despite a few unsuccessful endeavors, the Sanitation Districts have kept wastewater and solid waste service rates among the lowest in the nation.

"Without trying, there can be no innovation. And keeping prices low is a big deal because the money saved by residents and businesses can be invested in other improvements and keeps our economy going," Ferrante said. What does that shovel in his office really symbolize? Pride. Pride in service. Pride in integrity. Pride in innovation.

"Since the first sewer opened in 1925, Sanitation Districts' employees have been out there day in and day out, every day," Ferrante concludes. "Their job not only protects the public health and environment, but converts waste into resources for a more sustainable future." O



Be Sewer Smart

Here are some quick tips to make sure you are being sewer smart in your home!

In the kitchen:

FOG refers to fats, oils, and greases. These products can be harmful if not disposed of properly, leading to sewer backups and household & city plumbing issues.





In the bathroom:

Flush
Toilet Paper

Do Not Flush

Wipes of any kind

Paper towels

Tissues



#NoWipesInThePipes

For water saving tips and rebates, visit our website at www.ieua.org.







Yana Garcia was named CalEPA Secretary in August 2022. Above, she is sworn in by Gov. Gavin Newsom as her father Sergio Garcia holds the California Constitution and looks on. Garcia will lead state efforts to combat climate change, improve air and water quality, regulate toxic substances and more. Photos courtesy of the State of California

[YANA GARCIA From Page 14]

Garcia, who was appointed last year as the first Latina CalEPA Secretary by Gov. Gavin Newsom, oversees the state's efforts to fight climate change, protect air and water quality, regulate pesticides and toxic substances, achieve the state's recycling



Gov. Gavin Newsom

and waste reduction goals, and advance environmental justice.

"Yana's deep connection to communities, her strong track record as an environmental attorney in holding polluters accountable, and her commitment to bringing diverse interests together make her uniquely matched to the challenges facing California," said Gov. Newsom in announcing her appointment.

California's water supply strategy, released the same month Garcia's appointment, aims to help California prepare for a possible 10 percent long-term reduction in our water supply by 2040. "That is still a goal worth achieving," said Garcia. "While storage may come to mind immediately for a lot of folks as a way to get us there, we need to keep our focus on conserving water through better land use practices and meeting efficiency standards."

The state has also invested over \$8 billion to enhance the state's water resilience. The plan to modernize water infrastructure includes investments in storage, recycling, desalination, stormwater capture and conservation.

"Despite the heavy rain and snowpack we're seeing now, we always have to be ready for drought, and we have to remain vigilant of water quality impacts caused by the prevalence of

"Yana's deep connection to communities, her strong track record as an environmental attorney in holding polluters accountable, and her commitment to bringing diverse interests together make her uniquely matched to the challenges facing California."

contaminants. The less water we have, the more potent the impact of those contaminants."

As head of CalEPA, Garcia oversees the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), the Department of **Resources Recycling and Recovery** (CalRecycle), the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and the State Water Resources Control Board

Gov. Gavin Newsom

(SWRCB). She recognizes the importance of partnering with each of these departments and following through on commitments promised with tangible and beneficial results.

"Ultimately, we have to increase access to critical resources," she said. "We do that through comprehensive partnerships, not only with our government colleagues but also through effective partnerships with community-based organizations who really have the trust of so many hard-to-reach residents. It is also important

[See YANA GARCIA Page 22]





As CalEPA Secretary, Garcia leads many departments from water resources to toxic substance control. At left, Garcia speaks at a Coalition for Clean Air event in Sacramento. Above, she addresses the press in the farm community of Dunnigan northwest of Sacramento when Gov. Newsom lifted some drought restrictions. *Photos courtesy of the State of California*

[YANA GARCIA From Page 21]

that we retain transparency in our decision-making processes and that we deliver on our responsibility to protect and enhance the environment and the health of all Californians."

Garcia, who served from 2021 to 2022 as Special Assistant Attorney General to California Attorney General Rob Bonta, is nationally known for her work to uplift the voices of those from disadvantaged communities. In her tenure as an Assistant and Deputy Secretary at CalEPA she led three Environmental Justice Task Force Initiatives in the communities of Pomona, Imperial County and Stockton. She also led the program that delivered more than \$1 million in Environmental Justice Small Grants to 28 organizations to combat pollution, improve health outcomes and increase public engagement in some of California's most pollution-burdened communities. That program has now grown to a multi-year \$20 million investment program to increase capacity in some of the state's most pollution burdened areas.

"One of biggest lessons I learned early in my career is that all too often communities, particularly low-income communities and communities color, are faced with this false choice between economic growth and stability and access to clean, safe jobs and environmental quality," she said. "Our communities deserve both. I tend to approach decisions by taking a big step back from the notion that economic growth should come at the cost of environmental quality and health, or vice versa."

Garcia is proud of her accomplishments on the environmental justice front because she's witnessed the movement grow in power and influence in such arenas as drinking water quality, pollution and the oil and gas industry. Now, she is looking forward to crafting policy implementation strategies with a wide array of stakeholders.

"It's so important to notice who is at the decision-making table, and who is absent. My experience has been focused on marginalized communities who have all too often been left out," Garcia said. "But I'm equally committed to understanding where we may have a business perspective lacking or that of any stakeholder who is necessary in finding a particular solution."

In tackling the state's water supply challenges, Garcia aims to strike a balance between interests to protect the environment, human health and economic growth in the many regions of the state from rural to urban.

"I think municipal entities, water agencies, technology drivers, workforce developers, and more are really helpful in developing the kind of water solutions that we're going to need and in managing our water supply to deliver drinking water that's safe, clean and affordable to all Californians," she said. "We need to be able to capture water in these wet weather events through groundwater recharge and stormwater capture in our urban communities in order to build our resiliency for some of the drier weather events that we know will come despite the wet weather we've had recently." O





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Maintaining Improved Groundwater Supplies In the Main San Gabriel Basin



Our Unique Watershed

The purple-colored San Gabriel River "watershed" is one of several watersheds in Los Angeles County. Each watershed is formed by distinct topography, geology and hydrology. Decades ago, as reservoirs, dams, flood control channels, and spreading grounds were being planned, some watersheds built infrastructure that "flushed" water to the ocean via storm drains as fast as possible to reduce the risk of flooding, thus, saving life and property.

Within the San Gabriel River watershed, where about 80% of the water we use is local groundwater, we built our water infrastructure to retain as much stormwater within the Basin as possible so it could percolate down and recharge our groundwater supplies.

The Basin Achieved Significant Stormwater Capture Rates During Last Winter's Storms

The San Gabriel Valley captures more than 95% of stormwater, even during massive storms like we experienced earlier this year, to supplement local groundwater supplies. Local groundwater supplies have risen by about 50 feet this year! Data from Watermaster reveal that stormwater captured county wide was about 500,000 acre-feet, and more than 300,000 of it came from the San Gabriel River watershed.



Imported Water Supplies Help Maintain and Replenish the Water We Use

It's incumbent upon us to take advantage of our water supply improvements to prepare for future droughts. Imported water, which originates in northern California and is conveyed from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta by the State Water Project's aqueduct to Southern California, is a key resource. The San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (through its member agencies Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District and Three Valleys Municipal Water District) are state contractors which work closely with the state and LA County Department of Public Works to channel the imported water into reservoirs and spreading grounds in the Valley.



For the first time since 2006 (see graph), state water contractors will receive 100% of their imported water allocations this year. This means imported water will replace more of the water we use than in recent years, helping to preserve our improved water supplies.



Action Toward a Sustainable Water Future

Despite short-term improvements, we still use more water than Mother Nature provides. Our District is active on several fronts to plan for our water future. First, in 2020, the District committed \$2.68 million to help plan the Delta Conveyance Project which is designed to increase the reliability of imported water conveyed from the hub of the State Water Project, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (pictured above), to central and southern California. Second, we have embarked on a major condition assessment and maintenance project for our aging Azusa-Devil Canyon pipeline which connects to the State Water Project. Third, we are supporting the Pure Water Southern California recycled water project which could add up to 6,000 acre-feet of recycled water per year to the District's water portfolio.



Finally, we have provided more than \$8 million in loans and grants since 2020 to assist our member cities of Alhambra, Azusa, Monterey Park and Sierra Madre with

infrastructure projects such as water main construction and enhanced water treatment facilities, and water conservation projects such as community grants, rebate programs and school education programs. If we can increase our water saving, we can make our precious groundwater supplies last even longer!