



PRESS RELEASE

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Water Agencies Enter into Facilities Sharing Agreement

SAN BERNARDINO, CA – February 6, 2008 – Today, three Inland Empire water agencies entered into a facilities sharing agreement that will increase local water supplies, improve efficiency and save money. Under the agreement, the agencies will share existing facilities and land to capture water from the Santa Ana River and store it in the local groundwater basin for use as drinking water by local communities. The agreement will open existing facilities and lands to new uses by cooperating water agencies resulting in more efficient use of the local water resources needed to maintain water supply reliability of the increasing demands of the region.



From left, Board Presidents Patrick Milligan – San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Melody McDonald – San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District; and S. R. “Al” Lopez, Western Municipal Water District.

During today’s historic ceremonial signing, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District’s President Patrick Milligan stated, “This is a remarkable new day. I think this agreement is the start of a new day to the benefit of the people of this valley.” He was echoed by Western Municipal Water District’s Board President, S.R. “Al” Lopez. “It’s exciting to move forward together to develop the critical regional water resources needed for the future. Working collaboratively is the key.”

The Santa Ana River is the major source of local water supply for the region. The San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (Conservation District), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District) and Western Municipal Water District (Western) are combining their resources to ensure that this important local resource is fully utilized.

Under the agreement, the agencies will coordinate the use of the Conservation District’s groundwater recharge facilities. The facilities are used to divert water from the Santa Ana River to nearby spreading ponds where it percolates into the groundwater basin. The groundwater basin acts as a below ground “water bank” where water can be stored in wet periods and pumped out for use during drought periods.

The amount and timing of groundwater recharge will be controlled in part by a recently adopted regional water management plan. The plan has been prepared by Valley District with the participation of all local water agencies. Under this plan, the agencies’ goal will be to maximize the amount of groundwater recharge while also protecting groundwater quality and preventing the threat of liquefaction.

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The Conservation District owns and operates some 65 acres of recharge basins. The Agreement opens these basins and other lands up to new uses for water rights being sought by Valley District and Western from the State of California, and grew out of a resolution of conflicting claims over Santa Ana River water rights. This agreement takes on greater importance in light of Southern California long-term drought and the possible diminished reliability of imported water supplies.

In a joint-statement by Presidents Melody McDonald of the Conservation District, Valley District's Milligan and Lopez of Western: "The Santa Ana River is a vital resource. This agreement is an important milestone that will go a long way to ensure a safe and reliable water supply for our region."

The agreement also provides for the planning and construction of new facilities on Conservation District land, as needed. The agencies have already begun working together to jointly determine the need for and cost effectiveness of any future facilities.

The Conservation District was formed in 1932. Its principal task is to conserve water by diverting the natural flow of the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek into percolation basins that the District owns and operates. The Conservation District assists in the management of the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin - the major source of water supply for local communities.

Valley District was formed in 1954 as a regional agency to plan a long-range water supply for the San Bernardino Valley. It imports water into its service area through participation in the State Water Project and manages groundwater storage within its boundaries. The District covers about 325-square miles in southwestern San Bernardino County and has a population of about 600,000. It spans the eastern two-thirds of the San Bernardino Valley, the Crafton Hills, and a portion of the Yucaipa Valley and includes the cities and communities of San Bernardino, Colton, Loma Linda, Redlands, Rialto, Bloomington, Highland, East Highland, Mentone, Grand Terrace, and Yucaipa.

Western was formed by the voters in 1954 to bring supplemental water to growing western Riverside County. Today, the District serves eight retail and nearly 25,000 wholesale customers with water from the State Water Project and the Colorado River, as well as groundwater, to its 527-square mile service area that has a population of more than 825,000. As a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the District provides supplemental water to the cities of Corona, Norco, and Riverside and the water agencies of Box Springs Mutual Water Company, Eagle Valley Mutual Water Company, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, Lee Lake Water District and Rancho California Water District. Western serves customers in the unincorporated areas of El Sobrante, Eagle Valley, Temescal Creek, Woodcrest, Lake Mathews, March Air Reserve Base and Murrieta.

*****PHOTO EDITORS: Signing ceremony TIF and/or JPG available for print.**