



San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

*San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District
...our Mission explains our core values*

HISTORY AND MISSION

A long drought from 1898 to 1903 brought sustainable water supplies for the Santa Ana River to the forefront of attention for San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange County. A Tri-Counties Reforestation Association was formed, led by Francis Cuttle, the Manager of the Riverside Water Company. This group pushed for surface water flows to be stored underground for future use. In 1909 four entire sections were set aside by the Federal Government for water conservation.

Percolation ponds were dug and the Cuttle Weir was completed by 1914. These became the Water Conservation Association (WCA). In 1932 the San Bernardino Valley acquired the WCA upon passing of State Conservation District legislation. In 1934, the name was changed to San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District.



Contour ditch constructed by Water Conservation Association to conserve Santa Ana River water, Highland, Calif. April 1926

The District's mission and history are formed by water managers and users in the valley committed to recharging water into the ground for future use. The District performs this same service today and also recharges ground water for State Water Project, Big Bear and Seven Oaks Dam via agreements with water managers in the region.



Cuttle Weir, off Greenspot Road

WHAT WE DO

Today the District owns and manages about 4500 acres of land in the Santa Ana Wash. Daily operations are similar to 80 years ago. Facilities include percolation ponds, canals, weirs, gates, support roads and fences. A variety of equipment is maintained, cleaned and updated, when needed. In 1961, the City of Redlands transferred additional spreading grounds adjacent to Mill Creek for water conservation to the District.

OPPORTUNITIES

The District saw a monumental opportunity to better manage the Santa Ana River Wash for the communities, water management partners, mining partners, habitat agencies Bureau of Land Management and others. They developed what is called the Wash Plan. This plan would consolidate habitat for management and reorganize other land uses to make the most efficient use of the land resource. Over time, better scientific understanding of the faults underground and the US Army Corps of Engineers borrow pit excavation necessitated changes in percolation basins for optimum percolation into the groundwater. Mining expansion would be consolidated to areas near current activities and habitat blocks would be consolidated and set aside for management. This is a complex, ongoing project and requires the cooperation of cities, San Bernardino County, Federal land and resource agencies, yet it provides opportunity for the best managed future for the Region.



Seven Oaks Dam

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Well operators and water managers throughout the 92,000 acre Bunker Hill groundwater basin enjoy benefits from the replenishment of over 5 million acre foot storage in the basin. Conservation District boundary spans 50,000 acres and recharges on average 16,000 acre feet on behalf of water users. Operations are funded through a Groundwater Charge for facilities maintenance and upkeep. The cities of Redlands and Highland also partner with the District in Aggregate mining interests of the Santa Ana River Wash. Aggregate mining, some on District owned property is used for concrete and other construction. With the passage of the Endangered Species Act, land planning management and stewardship became a critical focus for the District.

CHALLENGES

What would an organization be without challenges? We have several challenges. Financially the District has base load (fixed) costs and ephemeral or variable revenues so critical management of revenue and expenses is required. Revenue from our Groundwater Charge now fully supports the cost of our groundwater recharge operations but drought and wet years can affect this balance. Additionally aggregate mining royalties vary with construction demand. The District has very limited staffing, big responsibilities and important projects such as the Wash Plan that require us to be nimble and efficient. In recent history the District was embroiled in regional water wars and disputes over parochial interests among various water related agencies. With these issues settled and cooperative relationships rebuilt we are working with our partners to develop sustainable groundwater management to benefit the District and the entire region now and for the future.

Finally, the species by species protection set up by the lawsuit driven Endangered Species Act implementation and the uncertainty that brings to management of lands and water are significant. We believe in a balanced approach to managing land and water resources to serve all uses habitat, water and land for the community we serve. We are committed to continued work with our partners to reach this balance spending scarce resources most effectively.

FUTURE

California has a unique history with special purpose governments. Our District has a long history of being an efficient special purpose District. It is our goal to exemplify the focus and efficiency that Districts like ours were created for. We are leveraging information and technology to provide better information and resources to our partners and the public to keep them informed of District efforts and operations. We have implemented systems to categorize our enterprises enabling better management, accountability and transparency to our partners and the general public. These and other efforts have resulted in the District being awarded the transparency Certificate of Excellence and District of Distinction accreditation from the Special District Leadership Foundation.

Additionally, the need for an implementable evergreen Wash Plan is as critical today as it was when it was first initiated. It is also as dependent on our partners, both federal and local to see it through. The Wash Plan has a 24 month schedule to be complete by November 2015. It will require the Wash Plan Task Force to work closely to bring the promise of additional jobs, road and other community infrastructure, additional water storage, and habitat resource preservation to fruition. At San Bernardino Water Valley Water and Conservation District we value the opportunity to continue to implement strategies together as responsible stewards of land and water for our next 100 years.

Relationships

Partnerships are critical for any organization. The District's originated as an association of interests interested in land and water conservation for the future of the region. Today much of the landscape has changed, but much of the District has and will continue to work in association with its partners and communities to use the resources The District's land use and property partners, water recharge partners and local communities are critical stewardship and water conservation.

