WATER REPLENISHMENT DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2016

CONSTRUCTION OF LANDMARK WATER PROJECT BEGINS

Project Will End Reliance on Imported Water, Fight the Drought and Stabilize Water Rates

Pico Rivera, CA. Thursday, Sept. 22, 2016 – Directors of the Water Replenishment District (WRD) of Southern California today broke ground to begin construction of a landmark wastewater recycling plant that will position WRD to become the largest water agency in the state to secure entirely all of its water supply directly from local sources, specifically recycled water, advanced treated water and stormwater.

Using ceremonial shovels, WRD's five directors, joined by California legislators, Senator Tony Mendoza and Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, turned the soil to symbolize the start of construction on the $107 million Groundwater Reliability Improvement Project known as GRIP.

"Today, we commit ourselves to independence from the Bay Delta and the Colorado River as we start construction for water sustainability for our groundwater basins," said WRD Board Treasurer Albert Robles. "WRD's development and use of local water supplies to eliminate the need for imported water didn't happen overnight but took a decade of planning, investment and above all – unwavering commitment," added Robles, who represents a WRD seat that includes Pico Rivera, home for the future GRIP plant. "When people criticized us for pursuing this project during the rainy years, we held steadfast knowing that our region needed leadership that would do right by future generations and not bow to the political expediency."

GRIP – the cornerstone of WRD's Water Independence Now (WIN) program – will enable the District to finally end its reliance on imported water from the environmentally sensitive Bay Delta and the Colorado River. The facility will also help fight the drought by creating a reliable water source, stabilize water rates and provide for water sustainability for the region. WRD manages two of the most heavily used urban groundwater basins in the United States. Water from WRD's basins supply half of the water used by 4 million residents in south Los Angeles County living in forty-three cities.

Once the GRIP plant is fully operational in 2018, it will purify enough recycled wastewater – acquired from the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts - to **eliminate the District's need to acquire billions of gallons annually of costly imported water** to replenish WRD's groundwater basins.

WRD Board Vice President Rob Katherman said "GRIP will help guarantee that when residents in the southern portion of Los Angeles County, including the South Bay, turn on their faucets there will be water. The problem, he noted, is that "the year-to-year and long-term availability of imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River is uncertain. As we have seen in the last few years, both

The Water Replenishment District of Southern California is the regional groundwater management agency that protects and preserves the quantity and quality of groundwater for two of the most utilized urban basins in the State of California. The service area is home to over ten percent of California's population residing in 43 cities in southern Los Angeles County. WRD is governed by a publicly elected Board of Directors which includes Willard H. Murray, Jr., Robert Katherman, John D. S. Allen, Sergio Calderon, and Albert Robles.

sources of supply are vulnerable to drought and regulatory curtailment, not to mention, unsustainability." On the other hand, recycled water is a reliable source for the future, Katherman noted.

GRIP's advanced treatment plant will purify recycled wastewater to near distilled levels, thereby meeting or exceeding federal and state water safety regulations.

"Today we are here to write a new chapter in WRD's history," said WRD President Willard Murray, Jr., reflecting on Southern California's long and colorful history of dependence on imported water at the ceremonial ground-breaking. That new chapter is one of water sustainability and independence from water transported hundreds of miles.

WRD Director Sergio Calderon noted how far WRD has come over six decades to reach full sustainability. "Fifty-four years ago, WRD used over 208,000 acre-feet of imported water pumped from the Colorado River for recharge in the spreading grounds," said Calderon. Now, the District imports only 21,000 acre feet (7 billion gallons) of water, and after GRIP kicks in there will be zero imports.

GRIP will be a significant drought-fighter. It will maximize the use of recycled water, a resource that has become increasingly precious because of the drought. Without GRIP, this water – even after being treated to high levels – would continue to be emptied into the ocean after only one use.

GRIP will also benefit rate-payers and the environment. Using locally available water as opposed to more costly imported water will stabilize water rates. It is also far more energy efficient to generate clean water from locally available recycled wastewater than to import water, a process that requires massive amounts of energy to transport the water over hundreds of miles from Northern California or the Colorado River.

In addition, even the cost of the GRIP plant makes economic sense as WRD Director John Allen pointed out. "WRD is in line to receive $15 million in state funding through the Proposition 1 Water Bond recently passed by voters and another $80 million in a 30-year, 1% loan through the State Revolving Fund, " said Allen. "This funding, administered by the State Water Resources Control Board, will allow this project to be built with no impact to water ratepayers throughout our 43-city service area."

Director Robles also thanked Pico Rivera for rolling out the welcome mat for the new plant. "And for the leaders and residents of Pico Rivera, let me give a special thanks for supporting us in building this important facility here in your great city," Robles said.

Robles also observed that WRD held community meetings with Pico Rivera residents to get their input on the design of the plant and the community amenities provided by it – including a community meeting room, an exhibition center focused on water issues, an attractive park-like setting and a small amphitheater for public events. "Thanks to all of those residents and city officials who came out and gave us input and direction as to what they wanted to see in a project that would be built in their community," Robles said.

"Years from now we will remember today as a turning point in how our region made an active decision to pursue water sustainability as a way of life," said President Murray, putting a final note on the day's event. "Generations from now will look back with appreciation for the forward thinking ideas and actions we celebrate this morning."