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MISSION

"To provide a sufficient supply of high quality groundwater in the Central and West Coast Basins through progressive, cost effective and environmentally sensitive basin management."

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I N F O R M A T I O N U P D A T E S S U M M E R 2 0 0 2



GENERAL MANAGER MOWRY'S MESSAGE

The WRD has never lost sight of its mission to provide a sufficient supply of high-quality groundwater in the Central and West Coast Basins through progressive and environmentally sensitive basin management. Through the years, the WRD has concentrated its efforts on improving groundwater supplies in the area. Today, largely because of the WRD's efforts, the quality and quantity of the groundwater in our area has significantly improved, making groundwater (which is more economical than imported water) available for you and your families.

About 12 years ago, the WRD's mission was expanded to include the responsibility for groundwater quality management, and we have since launched several clean water programs. These projects, like the Safe Drinking Water Program, have been successful in improving groundwater quality and are addressing the water quality concerns of pumpers and residents that use local wells for water.

For the first time in seven years, and in order to effectively maintain these programs, we have increased our current assessment rate. The assessment rate is the fee we charge groundwater pumpers – not residents – to pump water from the basins. The new rate of \$117.60 per acre-foot is only a 5 percent change. However, it will mean no more than a one and one-half percent increase to you and your family, if the groundwater pumpers choose to pass the change on to residents.

The rate increase is necessary for the WRD to continue to provide our residents and cities with reliable and safe water. Unfortunately, much of our costs are driven by outside forces. Most of the assessment rate, in fact, is used for the purchase of replenishment water from the Colorado River and northern California.

Rest assured, the new assessment rate will allow the WRD to continue with its critical programs to maintain the groundwater levels in the basins, clean up the underground water from salt intrusion, and ensure that you and your family have a reliable supply of clean water in the event of a drought or emergency.



The new Alamitos Barrier Recycled Water Project in Long Beach is expected to help protect the groundwater basin from seawater intrusion.

WRD Protects Groundwater Basin from Seawater Intrusion

Protecting the groundwater basins from seawater intrusion is one of several areas for which the WRD is responsible in southern Los Angeles County. Since its construction in 1964, the WRD has been responsible for pumping imported water into the Alamitos Seawater Intrusion Barrier to stop seawater contamination of the Central Basin.

Seawater intrusion became a serious problem, in part, because over pumping of the groundwater occurred during the 1950s. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works built the Alamitos Seawater Intrusion Barrier in an effort to stop seawater contamination. When wells are closed due to excessive salt, pumpers must purchase more expensive imported water to supply its customers with clean drinking water.

Realizing that imported water may not always be readily available, the WRD staff began developing alternatives to find a more reliable and cost-effective way of protecting the

basins from sea water intrusion. After nearly 14 months of construction, a state-of-the-art treatment facility that would further treat recycled water before pumping it into the Alamitos Seawater Intrusion Barrier is scheduled to be completed this December.

The \$16 million project, known as the Alamitos Barrier Recycled Water Project, will treat water from the Long Beach Water Reclamation Plant using microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light. This technique is considered the best technology currently available and has been successfully utilized for removing constituents in similar projects worldwide. The facility will produce

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WRD Works to Provide a Reliable Supply of Water

By now, most of us have read news accounts that Southern California and many parts of the nation are in the midst of a drought. Forecasters predict the hot, dry weather that has created drought conditions and fueled wildfires in western states is expected to last through September. For Los Angeles County, we have experienced the driest rainfall season ever recorded since 1877. Some forecasters say that there won't be much relief until winter, when an El Niño could bring storms. Other experts fret that the El Niño may be weak, if it exists at all.

But while Southern California is experiencing a drought, many water agencies don't anticipate any reduction of services to customers this year. At the WRD, every effort is being made to continue providing the nearly four million customers in the agency's service area

with a sufficient supply of high-quality groundwater. Because we have only received about one-third of the normal rainfall this past season, the WRD has to plan differently.

In a normal year, about 54,000-acre feet of storm water is spread into the groundwater basins (about 17.5 billion gallons). This year, however, only 12,000 acre-feet of storm water were captured. "The water levels in our basins are about 15 feet below our high water goals for the year," said Ted Johnson, the WRD's senior hydrogeologist. "We expect the water levels to drop further as the dry weather continues."

To help slow this decline, the WRD this year purchased an additional 20,000-acre feet of water (an acre-foot of water is 326,000 gallons or about the same amount of water used by a family of five

in a year) that was imported from the Colorado River and Northern California because of the dry season. The last thing the WRD wants to happen is for the water levels to drop significantly in the basins. When water levels drop too low it reduces the emergency supplies in storage and takes more energy (and money) to pump the water up to the surface.

Ultimately, the best and most effective way to conserve water is by making sure that you use your water resources wisely. Make sure that you are not wasting water and periodically check for leaks in pipes, hoses and faucets. Water is one of the most valuable resources we have and is critical to sustain life. At the WRD, we are working to make sure we have a reliable supply of water that is clean and safe for you and your family.

The WRD and the federal government are funding the project. Also, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has agreed to provide rebates for the project. Other agencies involved include the Long Beach Water Department, which will operate and maintain the plant; Los Angeles County Department of Public Works; Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts; Orange County Water District; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; Central Basin Municipal Water District; California Department of Health Services; and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Water quality will be extensively monitored at the plant and at a monitoring well. Plans include maintaining retention of the blended water in the ground for a minimum of nine months and creating a separator of at least 2,000 feet between delivery of water into the ground and an extraction point.

cover story continued

3,000-acre feet of water annually (about 2.7 million gallons daily) that will be blended with imported water and pumped into the barrier to protect against seawater intrusion. A Regional Groundwater Monitoring Office will also be built on the site, located just west of the 605 Freeway and south of Willow Street.

The benefits of this unique project include:

- Improving the reliability of water supply to the intrusion barrier.
- Decreasing reliance on costly imported water.
- Providing a more cost-effective source of water.
- Increasing recycled water use and water conservation.

"The project will reduce the use of imported water, thereby improving the reliability of supply to the barrier," said Hoover Ng, the WRD's water quality program manager. "This source of high quality, safe water is sustainable even during drought conditions."

Water Treatment Facility in Bell Gardens Nearly Completed

Two previously closed wells located in the middle of an elementary school are scheduled to open later this month. The WRD, working in conjunction with the Southern California Water Company, has constructed a wellhead water treatment facility near Cesar Chavez Elementary School.

The wells will provide clean, safe water to residents in Bell Gardens. The wells, known as Gage Wells I and II, contained an unacceptable level of the man-made chemical compound, Tetrachloroethylene (PCE), and were closed. The WRD clean-up project will benefit the community by:

- Improving drinking water quality and increasing water supplies.
- Removing contaminants from the groundwater basin.
- Preventing spread of contamination to other wells.

"This project is another example of the WRD's commitment to providing clean, safe drinking water to the residents of Bell Gardens," said Charlene King, a WRD assistant engineer who worked on the project.

Construction on the Gage project began last November. Since the project was located in a residential neighborhood, the WRD spent many days notifying the public about the construction. Public meetings were held with school employees, parents and community residents to inform them of the construction schedule and related impacts. Also, notices were



The water treatment facility will remove contaminants from groundwater wells and provide residents in Bell Gardens with clean, safe water.

distributed to nearby homes and businesses, and a toll-free WRD Community Information Hotline was established last year to answer questions from the public.

The Gage facility is part of the WRD's Wellhead Treatment Program, which was established in 1991 as part of its Clean Water Program. It enables groundwater pumpers to keep affected wells on-line and to bring otherwise non-working wells back into operation. Water treatment facilities have been built in South Gate, Pico Rivera, Paramount and Norwalk.

The WRD has completed nine wellhead treatment facilities in cooperation with groundwater producers, and is in the process of constructing five additional treatment facilities throughout southern Los Angeles County.

Talking the Talk

Free Groundwater Tour on September 21

In an effort to reach more participants, the WRD has scheduled a free groundwater tour on Saturday, Sept. 21. In the past, the tours were normally held during the week. But weekday tours made it difficult for those who wanted to attend, but could not take the time off from work.

The WRD Groundwater Tours have been popular with the public since the program was launched last October. Participants get a chance to visit a desalination facility in Torrance, see a water treatment facility and tour the San Gabriel River Spreading Grounds.

The tour begins with a 45-minute briefing on the WRD at the District's office, 12621 E. 166 St. in Cerritos. Tour participants then board a bus for the various sites. A complimentary lunch is provided by the WRD.

Those interested in attending the next tour should call Albert Frias in the WRD's Office of Government & Public Affairs at (562) 407-1913. Seating is limited, so please make your reservations early.