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WRD GOES TO COURT TO PROTECT DISTRICT'S WATER CUSTOMERS

Three cities are taken to court by WRD to protect other paying customers

Lakewood, CA — After accruing month after month of unpaid invoices, 10 consecutive months, the Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD) today filed suit against the cities of Downey, Cerritos and Signal Hill. WRD is asking the court to allow it to protect the other groundwater pumpers that serve 39 other cities and order the cities of Downey, Cerritos and Signal Hill to pay their respective outstanding water bill, totaling nearly \$5.3 million, or be enjoined from pumping anymore groundwater and obtain their water from alternative available sources to meet their water needs.

“WRD has been more than fair and patient in trying to amicably recoup the non-payment of water bills by the cities of Downey, Cerritos and Signal Hill, but in every situation, there’s a point where you have to say enough is enough,” said Albert Robles, President of the Board of Directors of WRD. “If anyone living in the City of Downey, Cerrito and Signal Hill stopped paying their water bill to the City for even three months, these cities would turn off the resident’s water.” President Robles continued, “Ironically, these cities are continuing to charge and collect from their residents for the very same groundwater that they inexplicably refuse to pay.”

WRD took legal action to protect the other groundwater pumpers in the district who pay their water bills and provide water to millions of residents and businesses within the boundaries served by WRD. In total, nearly 4 million people, approximately 10% of California’s population, rely on this important groundwater source for their water supply. By failing to pay their water bills to WRD, the other cities’ residents and businesses are being forced to subsidize these non-paying cities of Downey, Cerritos and Signal Hill. Moreover, without these revenues, WRD’s mission to meet the region’s demand for safe, reliable and affordable drinking water is threatened.

Should WRD stop providing groundwater to Downey, Cerritos and Signal Hill, these Cities would still have uninterrupted access to water from other providers, although it would likely come at a much higher cost. Groundwater is the least expensive source of safe and reliable drinking water. The cost of purchasing the alternative imported water can be up to 4 times the cost of WRD groundwater. Downey, for example, could see the cost of water go from \$6.5 million each year it currently pays WRD to over \$17 million, an amount inevitably to be passed onto its customers.

If the Court approves the injunction, the Cities will be prohibited from pumping groundwater but will still owe the past invoices. “In WRD’s more than 50-year history, this is the very first time WRD is forced to sue for failure to pay the water bill; in fact, this is the very first time anyone has consciously refused to pay their WRD water bill” said WRD President Albert Robles.

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, Lillian Kawasaki, Sergio Calderon, and Albert Robles. For more information, please visit WRD at www.wrd.org