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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2026



Five Southern California Water Agencies Complete $169 Million Regional Water Reliability and Restoration Program

Ribbon-cutting event celebrates more than a decade of collaboration, expanding groundwater storage across six basins, strengthening drought preparedness, and restoring critical habitat throughout the Santa Ana River watershed.

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – November 10, 2026 – After more than a decade of collaboration, five Southern California water agencies are celebrating the completion of a $169 million regional water management program. The program is designed to strengthen water supply reliability, restore critical habitat throughout the Santa Ana River watershed, and, on the brink of what is anticipated to be the most significant El Niño winter in recent history, optimize saving water in years of plenty to prepare for years of drought.

The Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP) brings together Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), Orange County Water District (OCWD), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD) and Western Municipal Water District (Western Water). Together, the agencies developed a regional approach to managing water resources across Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The approximately $169 million program combines $55 million in Proposition 84 funding through the *One Water One Watershed* grant from the State of California's Department of Water Resources with approximately $114 million in local and additional cost share. The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), a joint powers authority comprising the five agencies, coordinated regional program components and administered the grant funding.

Rather than developing separate solutions, the agencies worked across jurisdictional boundaries to coordinate groundwater storage, infrastructure, and operations. The result is a regional framework that allows participating agencies to make better use of available water supplies through storage, recovery, and exchanges across the watershed.

"DWR is proud to support this innovative partnership, which helps improve regional water reliability, strengthen drought resilience, and replenish groundwater supplies for future generations across California," said Tom Gibson, Director of the California Department of Water Resources. "This program demonstrates what can be achieved when local agencies work together to protect wildlife, restore critical habitat, and safeguard water supplies for millions of Californians."

A central component of SARCCUP is groundwater banking, which allows water to be stored underground when supplies are plentiful and recovered during droughts. Through investments in recharge facilities, wells, pipelines, pump stations, and regional connections, the program supports approximately 137,000 acre-feet of potential groundwater storage across six basins, depending on water availability and operating conditions.

For Western Water, SARCCUP included infrastructure investments that strengthen connections between regional water systems and improve the flexibility to move and manage water.

"SARCCUP has allowed Western Water to make strategic investments in infrastructure that strengthen our regional connections and give us greater flexibility to move and manage water," said Craig Miller, General Manager of Western Water. *"These investments help us make better use of available supplies and provide lasting value to our customers and the region."*

EMWD's participation included investments in groundwater replenishment facilities, extraction wells, and pipelines to expand regional storage and recovery capabilities.

"Because of this partnership, EMWD was able to utilize $13 million in grant funding to provide our region with a more reliable and cost-effective water supply future," said Joe Mouawad, General Manager of EMWD. *"As California continues to face a changing climate, it is critical that*

our agencies adapt our infrastructure to support groundwater sustainability. The new groundwater replenishment facility, wells, and pipelines that resulted from this collaborative effort will help create a more sustainable future for our region."

OCWD's portion of the SARCCUP program includes 36,000 acre-feet of groundwater banking capacity in the Orange County Groundwater Basin and five new production wells to expand the ability to recover stored water during droughts.

"SARCCUP demonstrates the value of regional partnerships in making better use of our water supplies," says John Kennedy, General Manager of OCWD. *"By storing water underground when it is plentiful, we can draw on those reserves during droughts when other supplies are limited. OCWD is contributing 36,000 acre-feet of groundwater banking capacity and helping conserve water through the removal of invasive, water-intensive vegetation along the Santa Ana River. These investments strengthen water supply reliability throughout the watershed and help us prepare for future droughts."*

Beyond water infrastructure, SARCCUP supported environmental restoration and water-use-efficiency projects throughout the watershed. The program funded the removal of approximately 685 acres of invasive Arundo vegetation and restoration of approximately 3.5 miles of streams and waterways, improving habitat for native species, including the federally protected Santa Ana sucker.

"The restoration of Anza Creek and Hidden Valley Creek shows what we can accomplish when we work together," said Heather Dyer, CEO / General Manager of SBVMWD. *"Through SARCCUP, we invested approximately $5 million to restore these important tributaries to the Santa Ana River, improving habitat for the federally protected Santa Ana Sucker and other native species. These projects demonstrate how we can protect and restore our natural resources while continuing to provide a reliable water supply for our communities."*

The effort required years of coordination on planning, funding, environmental review, and agreements governing how water could be stored, recovered, and exchanged across agency boundaries. IEUA served as lead agency for the program's Environmental Impact Report.

"This program reminds us that no single agency can drought-proof Southern California alone," says Kevin Alexander, General Manager of IEUA. *"Together, we can. SAWPA brought regional partners together for SARCCUP to show what that looks like in practice."*

The program also involved regional partners, including the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Municipal Water District of Orange County, Orange County Coastkeeper, Mesa Water District, East Orange County Water District, the City of Fullerton, the City of Tustin, the City of Orange, and others.

"After years of working together, it is amazing to see how these projects are not only benefiting local areas, but the entire watershed," says Karen Williams, General Manager of SAWPA. *"From restoring habitats of endangered species, ridding our watershed of harmful invasive species that impact water supply, and creating infrastructure that helps us store water in years*

of plenty for future years of drought, SARCCUP will benefit many generations to come in the Santa Ana Watershed."

The participating agencies celebrated the completion of SARCCUP at a regional ribbon-cutting ceremony on **Monday, November 9, 2026, at the Riverside Art Museum in Riverside, California.** Photos and videos from the event, along with photos of the projects, are available upon request by emailing media contact Emily Fuentes at efuentes@sawpa.gov, and ongoing resources will be available at sawpa.gov/SARCCUP.

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About EMWD
Eastern Municipal Water District is the water, wastewater service and recycled water provider to more than one million people living and working within a 682-square mile service area in western Riverside County and northern San Diego County. It is California's sixth-largest retail water agency, and its mission is "To deliver value to our diverse customers and the communities we serve by providing safe, reliable, economical and environmentally sustainable water, wastewater and recycled water services." More information can be found at www.emwd.org.

About IEUA
The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA/Agency) is an innovative, forward-thinking Agency serving 242-square miles in western San Bernardino County. The Agency is committed to supporting the needs of its service area and safeguarding public health through its significant investments in developing a diversified water supply portfolio, developing reliable municipal/industrial wastewater collection and treatment services, and other related utility services in a regionally planned and cost-effective manner. IEUA's mission ensures long-term success for the region and its customer agencies which include Chino, Chino Hills, Cucamonga Valley Water District, Fontana, Fontana Water Company, Montclair, Monte Vista Water District, Ontario, San Antonio Water Company, Upland, and West Valley Water District.

About OCWD
The Orange County Water District (OCWD) is a wholesale agency that manages and protects the Orange County Groundwater Basin, which provides approximately 85% of the water used by 19 retail water agencies that collectively serve 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. Since 1933, OCWD has strengthened the region's water future through groundwater management, water reuse, water quality protection, science and innovation, environmental stewardship, and fiscal responsibility. Learn more at www.ocwd.com.

About SAWPA
The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) is a joint powers authority located in Riverside, California. SAWPA focuses on a broad range of water resource issues including water supply reliability, water quality improvement, recycled water, wastewater treatment, groundwater management, brine management, and integrated regional planning. SAWPA's mission is to manage the Inland Empire Brine Line and to develop and maintain regional plans, programs, and projects that will protect the Santa Ana River basin water resources to maximize beneficial uses within the watershed in an economically and environmentally responsible manner. To learn more, please visit sawpa.gov.

About SBVMWD
San Bernardino Valley is a regional water agency with a service area that covers around 353 square miles in southwestern San Bernardino County and a small portion of Riverside County

with a population of approximately 714,000. With a dedicated team of experts and partnerships across the region, San Bernardino Valley is committed to building a resilient and sustainable water future for the community. Learn more at www.sbvmwd.com.

About WMWD

Western Municipal Water District is one of the largest public agencies in Riverside County, providing water and wastewater (sewer) services to nearly 1 million people, both retail and wholesale customers who live, work, and play within 527-square miles in one of California's most populous regions. Learn more: WesternWaterCA.gov.

SARCCUP is financed by the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), administered by State of California, Department of Water Resources through a grant with SAWPA and the SAWPA Member Agencies.