



NEWS RELEASE

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Drought is Normal: Storms Boost Water Supplies Short-Term Conservation and Infrastructure Management and Investments Needed for Long-Term Water Supply Sustainability

June 14, 2023 – Azusa, California: The San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (“the District”) hosted a briefing for Asian media representatives in the San Gabriel Valley to share the San Gabriel Valley “water story.” The primary objective of this year’s meeting was to discuss what could be done to ensure our improved water supplies (locally, statewide and imported) were more sustainable in the short and long-term as we confront a future characterized by population growth, business expansion, climate change and weather extremes. The District has hosted similar briefings for more than a decade in partnership with Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster and its member cities of Alhambra and Monterey Park. City council members from Alhambra and Monterey Park also were in attendance.

Water experts and managers from throughout the San Gabriel Valley were prompted by moderator Mike Eng, a current District board member (Division III-Monterey Park) and former Mayor and Councilmember for the city of Monterey Park. Panelists discussed the unique and strategic “water capture” capability of the Main San Gabriel Basin, which was designed to channel stormwater to reservoirs, rivers and spreading grounds where it percolates down to augment local groundwater supplies, unlike the Los Angeles and other watersheds which are designed to channel stormwater to the Pacific Ocean primarily as a flood control measure.

Given that 80 percent of the water used in the Basin is local groundwater and 20 percent is water imported to the Basin from northern California via the State Water Project, each source of the water we use was reviewed. Tony Zampello, Executive Officer for the Main San Gabriel Watermaster, which oversees groundwater management in the Basin, revealed, “Our local groundwater supplies were nearing record low levels prior to the recent storm

activity. More than 95% of the stormwater produced in the Main San Gabriel Basin during recent storms was captured and added to local groundwater supplies. Of the estimated 500,000 acre-feet of runoff captured in the greater Los Angeles region, about 300,000 acre-feet was captured in the Main San Gabriel Basin alone. The Main San Gabriel Basin groundwater supplies have added more than 50 feet of depth since the year began.” Zampielo added, “With temperatures about two degrees hotter, on average, now than 50 years ago, the amount of water soaking into the ground and replenishing groundwater will be reduced. Computer models show that in years to come, the dry years will be drier, and the wet years will be wetter.”

Darin Kasamoto, general manager of the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, which is one of 29 State Water Contractors which deliver imported water to supplement local groundwater supplies, added, “Our imported water allocations have been restored to 100 percent of plan, significant increases from the past two years when we only received 5 percent. While it’s a logistical challenge to quickly get all this water into the ground, we will combine and store the imported water with our local groundwater supplies. The drought is not over despite the welcome and abundant precipitation this year. We live in a dry region, we are experiencing impacts associated with climate change, and we generally use more water than Mother Nature provides.”

George Noriega, Water Operations Manager for the city of Monterey Park, and Steve Placido, board member for the District (Division II – Alhambra and Monterey Park), each gave presentations about water use and water conditions in the District’s member cities of Monterey Park and Alhambra. Each city accomplished water conservation gains during the recent drought, but while a “drought emergency” is no longer in effect in the state, the cities of Monterey Park and Alhambra have cautiously continued “Stage 2” water use restrictions aimed at reducing water use by 11-20%. Each city is actively funding investments in their water supply and conveyance infrastructure and water quality.

A primary message from each of the panelists was to “stay the course” with investments in water conservation and water infrastructure. Locally, Zampielo highlighted collaboration between diverse water agencies serving the Basin as optimizing the impact of recent storms and applauded long-term projects such as the recycled water project *Pure Water Southern California*, which is being advanced by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. At the state level, Kasamoto highlighted the District’s \$2.68 million investment in the *Delta Conveyance Project*, which would help stabilize the sensitive ecosystem and imported water supplies emanating from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. He also explained his District’s significant investments in its own aging pipeline, as well as joint investments with Alhambra, Monterey Park, Azusa and Sierra Madre in water main improvements and water treatment facilities.

The panel delved deeply into water conservation programs and incentives offered by the District and its member cities designed to cultivate a conservation “ethic” among young people. Director Steve Placido highlighted the District’s pilot conservation projects, school

education programs, rebate programs and other incentives. He stated, “we’ve offered a home water survey to all elementary schools in our member cities for over a decade which has reached nearly every high school graduate in our service area. Citizens and businesses have proven that conservation works, and we call on everyone to work together to conserve water now when it’s wet...for when it’s dry.”

Director Mike Eng concluded the meeting by calling attention to the importance of young people becoming activists for water sustainability. Eng stated, “We need our young people to consider careers in the water industry and to embrace conservation. As our future leaders, business owners and property owners, our young people can have a profound impact on their future quality of life by acquiring a conservation ethic today.”

Further information about District conservation and education programs, as well as rebates for the purchase of water-saving equipment, may be viewed on the District’s website (www.sgvmd.com). The District also produces printed/downloadable public education materials, conservation brochures and website information to assist owners, managers and residents of apartments, condominiums and multi-family dwellings.

For further information about water supply, water quality, water conservation and water use restrictions in Alhambra, please visit: <https://www.cityofalhambra.org/departments/utilities-department>. For further information about water supply, water quality, water conservation and water use restrictions in Monterey Park, please visit: <https://www.montereypark.ca.gov/608/Water>.

About the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

The mission of the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District is to provide reliable supplemental water for the communities of Alhambra, Azusa, Monterey Park and Sierra Madre in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner.

The District was formed in 1959 after winning approval from the voters of Alhambra, Azusa, Monterey Park, and Sierra Madre. In anticipation of its long-term water needs, the District entered into a contract with the State of California Department of Water Resources in 1962 for the import of 25,000 acre-feet of water per year (now 28,800 acre-feet per year) from the State Water Project to supplement local water supplies in the San Gabriel Valley. The District is one of 29 State Water Contractors who obtain water from the State Water Project. The District operates the 38-mile Devil Canyon-Azusa pipeline which connects to the State Water Project, as well as several other facilities including a hydroelectric plant. The District also provides extensive public education and water conservation services throughout its service area. The Board of Directors meets regularly the second Monday of each month at 8 a.m. at District headquarters in Azusa. For more information, please visit our website: www.sgvmd.com. Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster’s educational website is www.thewatersthatconnectus.com.

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