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NEWS RELEASE

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY THIS FALL WILL HELP LOCAL WATER DISTRICTS CAPTURE MORE MOUNTAIN RUNOFF FROM WINTER STORMS

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District and Western Municipal Water District are sharing the costs of improvements to a water diversion facility that could double the amount of Santa Ana River water that is collected to replenish the groundwater basins

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif., Nov. 18, 2009 – Three Inland Empire water districts are making improvements to a water diversion facility downstream of the Seven Oaks Dam in an effort to capture more mountain runoff from winter storms.

The three districts – San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District and Western Municipal Water District of Riverside County– are jointly funding improvements to the Cuttle Weir, a small, dam-like structure about a half-mile downstream from the Seven Oaks Dam that diverts water from the Santa Ana River so that it can be used to recharge the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin.

Originally built in 1930, the Cuttle Weir has an existing capacity of 150 cubic feet per second, according to a 2008 study by MWH, an Arcadia-based engineering firm. But by making improvements recommended in the MWH study, local water districts believe they can double the Cuttle Weir's diversion capability to 300 cubic feet per second before this winter's rains begin.

"We're being proactive," said Randy Van Gelder, general manager of San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. "Weather forecasters are calling for a moderate El Niño condition and the improvements we're making to the Cuttle Weir could help us capture runoff we would otherwise lose had we not made these improvements."

Claud Seal, assistant general manager of the Conservation District, said, "The Cuttle Weir improvement project will result in significant gains in water diversions." adding that "a single cubic foot per second gain in water diversion could yield two additional acre feet of water per day for groundwater recharge purposes. At that rate, the Cuttle Weir improvements could enable the districts to capture up to 300 additional acre-feet of water per day during peak runoff periods this winter." One acre-foot of water equals 325,851 gallons and will supply two average households, with two residents each, with water for one year.

The increased Santa Ana River diversions are made possible by Valley District and Western, which obtained approval from the State Water Resources Control Board

last month to capture additional Santa Ana River runoff made available through the construction and operation of Seven Oaks Dam. Valley District and Western are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Bunker Hill and Lytle Creek groundwater basins and will use whatever additional water they obtain from the Santa Ana River for that purpose.

The Cuttle Weir is located on property owned and operated by San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, hence the need for interagency cooperation. In fact, while the Cuttle Weir improvements are jointly funded by these three agencies, the Conservation District is acting as the lead agency and is supervising the actual improvements, which will include removing boulders and other debris that have collected near the Cuttle Weir, raising the Cuttle Weir's existing notches and installing controllable floodgates.

During the next few years, the three agencies plan to cooperate on additional improvements, which will boost the Cuttle Weir's diversion capacity to 500 cubic feet per second.

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District was formed in 1954 as a regional agency to plan a long-range water supply for the San Bernardino Valley. It imports water into its service area through participation in the State Water Project and manages groundwater storage within its boundaries. Valley District's customers include 13 retail water agencies from Rialto to Yucaipa, which collectively have more than 700,000 business and residential customers. Valley District's 350-square mile service area spans the eastern two-thirds of the San Bernardino Valley, the Crafton Hills, and a portion of the Yucaipa Valley and includes the cities and communities of San Bernardino, Colton, Loma Linda, Redlands, Rialto, Bloomington, Highland, East Highland, Mentone, Grand Terrace, and Yucaipa.

Western Municipal Water District was formed by the voters in 1954 to bring supplemental water to growing western Riverside County. Today, the District serves eight retail and nearly 25,000 wholesale customers with water from the State Water Project and the Colorado River, as well as groundwater, to its 527-square mile service area that has a population of more than 825,000. As a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the District provides supplemental water to the cities of Corona, Norco, and Riverside and the water agencies of Box Springs Mutual Water Company, Eagle Valley Mutual Water Company, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, Lee Lake Water District and Rancho California Water District. Western serves customers in the unincorporated areas of El Sobrante, Eagle Valley, Temescal Creek, Woodcrest, Lake Mathews, March Air Reserve Base and Murrieta.

In 1910, the Water Conservation Association (WCA) was organized to conserve water of the Santa Ana River by storing it in the groundwater basin for future use. San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District was formed in 1931 to protect against excessive exports of water to downstream agencies. The WCA was dissolved in the early 1940s and all land and water property was transferred to the District. It works to conserve water by diverting the natural flow of the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek into percolation basins that the District owns and operates. Its 78-square mile boundary encompasses the majority of the eastern and central part of the Bunker Hill Basin and includes the communities and cities of Mentone, Redlands, Loma Linda, Highland and portions of San Bernardino.