

Douglas Headrick
(909) 387-9226
douglash@sbumwd.com

NEWS RELEASE

WATER DISTRICTS ARE USING FLOOD CONTROL BASINS TO TAKE DELIVERY OF IMPORTED WATER BEFORE WINTER RAINS ARRIVE

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and six other Inland Empire water agencies are working cooperatively to recharge local groundwater basins with 16,000 acre-feet of State Water Project water

SAN BERNARDINO, Nov. 18, 2009 – It's not raining, but several Inland Empire flood control detention basins are filled with water that is being used to recharge local groundwater basins, thanks to a cooperative effort by local water agencies.

Inland Empire water agencies have drawn down their groundwater basins more than usual this year as a result of court ordered cutbacks in State Water Project deliveries from the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta coupled with several years of below average precipitation.

But when state officials announced late last summer that additional Northern California water would be available for export to Southern California this fall, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District bought up as much of it as it could – about 16,500 acre feet – and paid for it with the help of six local water agencies, which are sharing the cost of pumping the water to the Inland Empire.

"We're making it rain with Northern California water," said Randy Van Gelder, general manager of San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, whose primary responsibilities are to supply 13 Inland Empire water agencies with imported water and to maintain the integrity of the Bunker Hill and Lytle Creek groundwater basins.

"We are working cooperatively with local water agencies to make sure that every drop of water that is made available to our district is delivered to our district," Van Gelder said.

Local water district officials, for their part, said they were pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the groundwater recharge effort.

"We are glad to see this water being stored in our local basins now," said Robert Martin, general manager of East Valley Water District in Highland, which helped purchase 1,500 acre feet of State Water Project (SWP) water. "It's not going to solve all of our problems, but every little bit helps with the drought we've been having. The additional water will also help a number of our wells downstream from the recharge basins."

Stacey Aldstadt, general manager of the San Bernardino Municipal Water Department, which purchased 6,300 acre-feet of SWP water, was equally

enthused about the cooperative recharge effort. “We’re just very pleased and happy with the relationship we have with Valley District and the ability of our agencies to work together for the betterment of the groundwater basins.”

“The more water we can purchase for groundwater recharge, the better,” said Joseph Zoba, general manager of Yucaipa Valley Water District, which purchased 2,000 acre-feet of SWP water. The Yucaipa district has been purchasing SWP water from Valley District for the past two years in an effort to relieve some of the pressure on its local groundwater basin.

Other local water retailers that shared in the cost of the groundwater recharge effort include the San Bernardino Valley Conservation District, with 2,000 acre-feet of water; West Valley Water District, with 1,200 acre-feet of water; Riverside Public Utilities, with 2,500 acre-feet of water; and the City of Redlands, with 1,000 acre-feet of water.

Van Gelder said the Bunker Hill and Lytle Creek groundwater basins have already been recharged with about 11,000 acre-feet of SWP water during the past two months. The remaining 5,500 acre-feet of water are expected to percolate through local flood control detention basins to the groundwater basins by the end of this month.

“We are trying to move the water into the recharge basins before the winter rains begin,” Van Gelder said.

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. Additional information is available at www.sbvwmwd.com.