

PRESS RELEASE



FOR RELEASE: NOON (PST) Wednesday, June 21, 2017

(Images available upon request)

First Bottles of Purified Recycled Water Debut in North America

***Orange County Agencies Hand Out Free Samples to Promote
Technological Advancements for Safe, Reliable New Water Sources***

HOLLYWOOD – For the first time in the Western Hemisphere, the public will receive bottles of highly purified wastewater, demonstrating the safety and technological advancements of sophisticated treatment systems that now provide new sources of drinking water, officials announced today.

The Orange County Water District (OCWD) and Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD), collaborators in the world’s largest water purification facility of its kind—the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), officially kicked off a statewide tour to pass out free bottles of GWRS water to further convince the public that purifying what once was wastewater can become a trusted new water resource.

“California, and the world, are increasingly becoming aware that we can reuse our local water supplies in a safe and cost-efficient manner. We have perfected the treatment technology at our Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) facility,” said OCWD President Denis Bilodeau. “We are taking our water and our message to the public to alleviate any ‘yuck’ factor.”

The GWRS has been providing advanced purified water since 2008. It’s a proven source of reclaimed water that costs far less than water imported from Northern California and the Colorado River.

Currently, regulations limit the use of advanced purified water to replenish groundwater basins even though the GWRS facility creates water that exceeds state and federal drinking water standards. Under California law AB 2022, adopted last year to expand the public’s awareness of water treatment advancements as the state marches toward direct potable reuse of this water, agencies such as OCWD are now allowed to bottle highly purified recycled water to be handed out for free as an educational tool. The water is so pure, it is near-distilled in quality.

“Today, we launch a year-long effort to reach as many people as we can in California to share our success and promote a very sustainable process that will increase our water reliability in the

state,” said OCSD and GWRS Steering Committee Chair Greg Sebourn. “We’re able to produce safe and great-tasting drinking water, so let’s do all we can to preserve local water supplies by reusing them.”

OCWD and OCSD chose a busy Hollywood tourist location to educate the public about the state-of-the-art purification system and increase public acceptance of recycled water. Approximately 2,000 bottles were freely distributed during the hour-long display along Hollywood Boulevard.

“As public agencies, we have a duty to share our commitment to creating safe, reliable and new sources of water with communities that, otherwise, might be put off without the knowledge we are providing and without being able to taste it,” said Bilodeau. “We’ve given tours of our facility for years, but this educates a limited audience. Now, with these bottles, we are able to reach a much larger audience.”

Using a custom-built “lemonade stand” with picture boards and descriptive brochures, the two districts will be visiting college campuses, festivals and other public events to pass out limited quantities of the commemorative bottles of water and describe the three-step purification process. The year-long tour also celebrates the upcoming 10-year anniversary of the GWRS facility, which will expand its capacity in the near future to produce 130 million gallons a day of purified recycled water—enough for 1 million people.

“The GWRS facility saved us during the most recent drought. It also gives Southern California one of the least expensive new sources of water,” Bilodeau said.

Although state health officials are currently drafting rules that could eventually permit recycled water to be sent directly to drinking water supplies (direct potable reuse), OCWD’s authority is confined to using purified recycled water indirectly, to replenish Orange County’s vital groundwater basin.

For more information about the GWRS and to learn when the bottle tour will come to your city, visit www.ocwd.com/gwrs.

About the Orange County Water District

The District is committed to enhancing Orange County’s groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities utilize the groundwater basin managed by OCWD and receive approximately 75 percent of their water supply from it: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster, and Yorba Linda. For more information about the Orange County Water District and its board of directors, call (714) 378-3200 or visit www.ocwd.com.

About the Orange County Sanitation District

OCSD is a public agency that provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.5 million people in central and northwest Orange County. OCSD is a special district that is governed by a 25-member Board of Directors comprised of 20 cities, four special districts, and one representative from the Orange County Board of Supervisors. OCSD has two operating facilities that treat wastewater from residential, commercial and industrial sources. For more information, about the Orange County Sanitation District visit www.ocsd.com or call (714) 962-2411.

#

News media contacts:

Denis Wolcott, Dick Jones Communications: Denis@dickjones.com, 213-200-1563 (Contact for images, footage)

Gina Ayala, OCWD: Gayala@ocwd.com, 714-378-3323

Rebecca Long, OCSD: Rlong@ocsd.com, 714-593-7444