METROPOLITAN HELPS ADVANCE STORMWATER CAPTURE AND RECYCLING PROJECTS

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is helping advance two local supply projects that will further diversify and strengthen the region’s water reliability, under two agreements approved Tuesday by the district’s board of directors.

The board approved an agreement with the Municipal Water District of Orange County and the Santa Margarita Water District to provide funding for a recycled water project. It also approved an agreement with the Inland Empire Utilities Agencies to help fund a stormwater capture project as part of a Metropolitan pilot program that helps measure the potential benefits of such projects for the region.

“The impacts of climate change require us to continue to adapt our imported water supply facilities and strategies while finding ways to develop new sources, such as recycled water and stormwater capture,” said Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray. “This is what Metropolitan does – we constantly respond to what our region needs and are proud to partner with our member agencies to produce far-ranging benefits for all of Southern California.”

Metropolitan will invest up to $1.5 million over the next 25 years for water produced by the Santa Margarita Water District’s proposed Los Flores Recycled Water Expansion Project, which is expected to begin producing up to 209 acre-feet of recycled water per year for irrigation purposes beginning in 2022. An acre-foot of water typically serves three Southern California households for a year. The project consists of building about 12,000 feet of new recycled water distribution pipelines and repurposing a surplus sewer lift station to serve as a recycled water booster pump station.

The funding comes from Metropolitan’s Local Resources Program, which was created in 1982 to provide financial incentives to local and member agencies to develop local supply projects, such as water recycling, groundwater recovery, and seawater desalination. Since its inception, Metropolitan has supported the production of nearly 4.1 million acre-feet of recycled water and recovered groundwater. In 2019-20, Metropolitan incentivized member agencies to produce about 128,000 acre-feet of local supplies.
Metropolitan doesn’t currently offer LRP incentives for stormwater capture, due to the need to better understand how much water such projects actually yield for use.

“We need more information, which is why we created a Stormwater for Recharge Pilot Program,” said Water Resources Management Group Manager Brad Coffey. “By helping to fund these projects, we’re able to gather the data we need to better understand the potential benefits stormwater capture projects can deliver to Southern California.”

Metropolitan’s agreement with Inland Empire Utilities Agency invests up to $990,000 into construction and monitoring of the agency’s Montclair Basins Improvement Project, including constructing upgrades to the existing Montclair Basin, performing groundwater modeling and performing a minimum of three years of stormwater recharge monitoring and reporting.

The project is the third agreement to be approved under Metropolitan’s Stormwater for Recharge Pilot Program, which was approved by the board in 2019. Metropolitan has received an additional three applications, which are currently being reviewed by staff.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative that, along with its 26 cities and retail suppliers, provide water for 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.