

State Water Resources Control Board

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Contact: Tom Mays
Robert Miller
916-341-5254

State Board Loans \$5.3 Million to Nature Conservancy To Buy Environmentally Sensitive Ranchland Cuyamaca Property to Provide Buffer for Water Supply

SACRAMENTO — In an effort to improve water quality in San Diego County, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) today approved a \$5.3 million State Revolving Fund loan to The Nature Conservancy for purchase of up to 2,117 acres of the Cuyamaca Ranch.

The property, located 40 miles northeast of San Diego, lies along the northern border of the Cuyamaca Reservoir, a vital water supply for the region. The reservoir drains into Boulder Creek, which flows into El Capitan Reservoir, a drinking water source owned by the City of San Diego. Cuyamaca Reservoir is the only drainage for the reservoir.

Urban development is already occurring adjacent to the Ranch property, and continued development would likely increase the amount of nutrients, bacteria, sediment, and pesticides in the water supply. By authorizing the loan to The Conservancy, the State Board hopes to maintain a buffer zone around the Cuyamaca Reservoir that is free from future development, helping to ensure that high quality water is maintained in the Reservoir.

This cooperative agreement between The Conservancy and the State Board will have numerous benefits for both residents of the county and the wildlife that inhabits the area. Cuyamaca Reservoir is not only an important supplier of water for the City of San Diego, but the area also encompasses numerous streams and freshwater seeps that replenish the Reservoir and provide the city with groundwater during dry seasons. Cuyamaca Ranch also houses a significant number of wildlife on the Federal and/or State Endangered Species list, and has been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Native Plant Society as containing unique or outstanding plant and wildlife habitat values. Purchase of the property will ensure that these plant and animal species are able to enjoy an area free from encroachment and urban development.

“We’re very pleased that this money is going towards such a beneficial project,” said State Board Chairman Arthur Baggett. “Not only will The Nature Conservancy’s purchase ensure that water quality for San Diegans remains at a high standard, but the agreement has great benefits for wildlife in the area as well. It’s really a win-win situation.”

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