



Media Release

State Water Board celebrates groundwater project, seawater intrusion protection in Santa Cruz

State provided \$52 million for Pure Water Soquel

December 10, 2021

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SACRAMENTO – Advancing efforts to improve resilience and combat climate change impacts threatening the region's drinking water supply, the State Water Resources Control Board joined the Soquel Creek Water District today at the groundbreaking of a recycled wastewater treatment facility that will replenish groundwater and prevent further seawater intrusion in the critically overdrafted Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin.

Pure Water Soquel, which received \$52 million toward the project from the State Water Board with an additional \$34 million loan currently under review, will address several water quality concerns. Historically, more water is extracted from the basin than is restored by rainfall, resulting in a shortage and enabling seawater to move inland and contaminate the district's only drinking water source. The threat has been accelerated by warming ocean temperatures that contribute to sea level rise and increase the amount of salinity in the groundwater.

Upon completion in 2023, the plant will move recycled water from the Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment Facility through an advanced purification process that produces water of near-distilled quality. The water will then be stored underground to replenish the basin, serve as a barrier against further seawater intrusion and improve drinking water reliability for an estimated 40,500 district customers and others within the area who rely exclusively on groundwater.

"Climate change is challenging us all to become more creative and inclusive as we accelerate efforts to preserve our water supply," said chair E. Joaquin Esquivel. "Water recycling is a creative solution, and we are working with partners like the Soquel Creek Water District to help broaden access to recycling projects beyond big, major cities. We are eager to support local leaders and their vision as they develop new ways to address multiple challenges and goals."

The project will capture about 25% of the treated wastewater currently discharged to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and purify it for beneficial reuse. The technology uses advanced water treatment processes of microfiltration, reverse osmosis and advanced oxidation with ultraviolet light to produce water that meets state



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and federal standards and is of safe, near-distilled, purified water quality. Similar water purification technology is used or being implemented at plants throughout California and the United States, among them Pure Water Monterey, Pure Water Oceanside and Orange County's Groundwater Replenishment Project.

The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.