



Increasing Water Supply in Orange County

Cities and water agencies work 24/7/365 to ensure a reliable and high-quality supply of water to their communities. As the region's groundwater authority, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) takes this mission to heart, and sustainably manages the Orange County Groundwater Basin, which supplies groundwater to the City of Fullerton and 18 other cities and retail water districts in north and central Orange County.

It's an all-of-the-above approach when it comes to managing local water supplies from- protecting the groundwater basin; Orange County's rights to the Santa Ana River; increasing water recycling; capturing stormwater; cleaning up groundwater contamination, and ensuring a safe, clean water supply.



Annually, in April, OCWD determines the cost and availability of groundwater to its 2.5-million-person service area. This year, the OCWD Board took action to continue to provide an affordable, reliable water supply through the establishment of its fiscal year 2023-2024 groundwater rates and groundwater pumping percentage, which increased the amount of water that cities and water districts can pump to 85% for the upcoming fiscal year. This means the groundwater basin continues to serve the majority of our communities' drinking water needs. The remaining 15% comes from sources in northern California and the Colorado River that are imported by the Metropolitan Water District, southern California's imported water wholesaler.

Local groundwater costs approximately half as much and is more reliable than imported water. Increasing the availability of this local source allows cities such as Fullerton to pump greater amounts of lower cost groundwater as our primary drinking water supply and reduce our need for more expensive imported water.

Due to sound planning and investments over the years, OCWD has been able to maintain low rates while providing an ever-increasing water supply. With the completion of the final expansion of its Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) wastewater recycling project, more local wastewater from residents and businesses will be purified to drinking water standards and put into the groundwater basin. The District also maximized its stormwater capture efforts, storing as much as possible with all the rain we received this season. As measured at the District's field headquarters in Anaheim, we have received more than 25 inches of rain since July 2022, which is almost double our annual average!

Our groundwater basin covers more than 300-square-miles and is continually replenished as water is pumped out and used on a daily basis. Water in the basin is monitored daily to ensure sustainable levels at all times. OCWD manages an advanced system of more than two dozen recharge basins, which slowly put water back into the groundwater basin aquifers while naturally filtering and purifying it.



The District also operates important infrastructure such as inflatable rubber dams, “T and L” levees (as pictured above), pumps, and pipelines that move water to its different recharge facilities. Water from the GWRS is also sent to injection wells located along Orange County’s coast to create a seawater intrusion barrier that protects groundwater supplies from saltwater contamination.

We’re proud of our efforts to carefully manage the groundwater basin, which provides a reliable, local supply of water, at affordable rates. We encourage you to learn more about your local water supply by visiting ocwd.com or contacting the [City of Fullerton Public Works Department](#).

In collaboration with Orange County Water District staff, this article was provided by Orange County Water District Director Bruce Whitaker, who represents Division 10, which covers the city of Fullerton. Contact Director Whitaker at BWWhitaker@live.com.