



Capturing Stormwater in Orange County

In a month that historically gets 0.1 inches of rain, August brought a surprising 2.59 inches to Orange County. This was largely due to the arrival of Tropical Storm Hilary, which bolstered local water supplies. Due to decades of sound planning, regional partnerships, and investments in infrastructure, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) maximized stormwater capture efforts, ensuring not a drop of water was lost to the ocean. The District has also increased water storage behind Prado Dam to more than 3.4 billion gallons of water.

The rain we received was captured in the District's managed aquifer recharge system, which will eventually percolate into the Orange County Groundwater Basin – a vital resource managed by OCWD that serves 2.5 million people, including our residents and businesses in the city of Fullerton. Located in the northern part of the county, our recharge system consists of a series of rubber dams, pumps and two dozen percolation ponds working together to get water in the basin.

Additionally, a historic cooperative agreement with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has continued to allow OCWD to store water behind Prado Dam. This pool of water can be strategically held back and released at rates that the District can capture through its recharge system, eventually flowing into the basin and increasing local drinking water supplies. The amount of water currently held behind the dam is enough to serve 100,000 people for one year and is valued at an estimated \$12.6 million, equivalent to the cost of imported water. This further reinforces the need to invest in local water supplies.



Capturing stormwater has been part of the District's diverse water supply portfolio for decades. Thanks to the incredible partnership with the Corps, we have continued to increase stormwater capture behind Prado Dam, which has proven to be an economical and effective solution to the region's water challenges without compromising the safety of the dam.

To further enhance stormwater capture, OCWD is testing Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) at Prado Dam. With the support of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego and the Corps, FIRO aims to develop improved weather

forecasting, including storms and atmospheric rivers, and ultimately update the Corps' control manuals to increase water storage levels behind Prado Dam.

OCWD is well positioned to maximize water supply for the region, during wet or dry times. We are thankful for the rain we receive and hope to have more this year, but since we can't rely on Mother Nature to provide for our water needs, OCWD will continue to actively invest in the development of local water supplies and ensure a sustainable groundwater basin that will serve generations to come.

If you have any questions about the Orange County Water District or the groundwater basin, please contact us at (714) 378-3200 or visit our website at www.ocwd.com.

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