

# Sustaining Orange County's Groundwater: A Model of Responsible Management



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Groundwater depletion has become a concerning issue across various regions in California, sparking discussions about sustainable water management. However, amidst these concerns, Orange County stands out as a beacon of responsible water stewardship. Unlike other areas grappling with declining aquifers, Orange County takes proactive measures to ensure the health and sustainability of its groundwater basin.

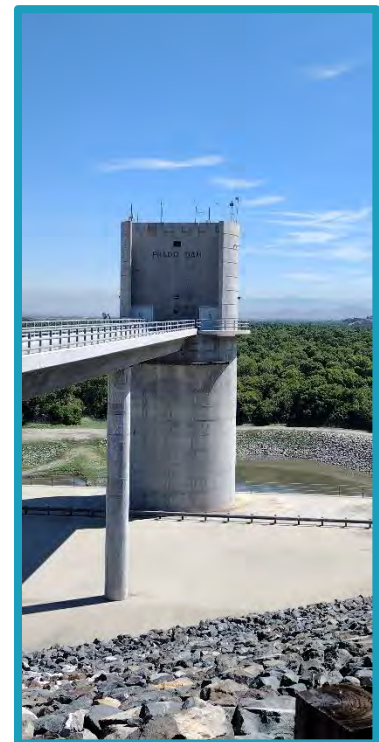
For more than 90 years, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) has upheld its duty as stewards of the Orange County Groundwater Basin, implementing innovative practices to safeguard this precious resource. Over the years, OCWD has doubled the basin's annual output, ensuring a reliable and cost-effective water supply for its 19 cities and retail water districts, who serve a collective 2.5 million people.

This is accomplished through finding new ways to replenish, or recharge, the basin so it operates at a safe and healthy level.

OCWD maintains one of the world's most advanced aquifer recharge systems to replace the water that is pumped from wells belonging to local water agencies, cities, and other groundwater users. Groundwater is more reliable, uses less energy, and is approximately half the cost of imported water, which has historically been a primary source of drinking water for other Southern California agencies.

Our groundwater basin is filled with several water sources – Santa Ana River flows, natural rainfall, stormwater capture, imported water from northern California and the Colorado River, and purified wastewater from the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), a facility that recycles 100% of local reclaimable wastewater flows and produces 130 million gallons of pure drinking water every day.

OCWD is committed to developing local water supplies because we know we can't rely solely on Mother Nature to meet our water needs. However, when it does rain, we are prepared to capture as much water as we can. With the storms that hit southern California in February, we are thrilled to report we have captured and recharged approximately 20 billion gallons of water into the basin. Additionally, through a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, we have 6.5 billion gallons of water stored



behind Prado Dam in Corona. This water will eventually be released at rates the District can capture and recharge into the basin. With all of this water, OCWD expects the groundwater basin to be 100% full after this winter.

Part of managing the groundwater basin also means maintaining its high-quality water. Whether it is protecting the basin from seawater intrusion or addressing groundwater contamination caused by third party industrial and chemical manufacturers, OCWD's remains vigilant in preserving the integrity of the groundwater basin.

As other areas in the state are challenged by groundwater depletion, OCWD is proud to share that it has not only sustained but enhanced the basin's resilience today, tomorrow and for future generations through innovative strategies, sound policy and management, and investments in water infrastructure.

If you would like to learn more about the Orange County Water District and the Orange County Groundwater Basin, please visit our website at [www.ocwd.com](http://www.ocwd.com). Let's connect soon!

*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](mailto:BWWhitaker@live.com).*