

State Adopts New Water Recycling Regulations



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In California, the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) serves as the agency that regulates statewide drinking water and develops permits, policy, and regulations to protect water quality. This agency was also responsible for carrying out a series of legislative decisions regarding direct potable reuse (DPR) – a method in which recycled wastewater can be safely and directly piped into a water distribution system.

This decision, following years of research and public engagement, represents a major milestone in expanding California's water supply and opens the door for agencies across the state to explore local projects that can strengthen their water portfolio. It builds upon the current regulations that enable indirect potable reuse (IPR), which allows recycled wastewater to be injected into a lake, river, or groundwater aquifer before being pumped through a water distribution system.

For decades, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) has led the industry in advancing water reuse policy and projects, as seen through its Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) – the world's largest indirect potable reuse facility. We have received some interest and questions about the new DPR regulations as they relate to the GWRS and would like our community members to know more about this.

First, OCWD has deeply supported several types of water reuse projects, understanding that the science and technology has proven to be a success and that it can be effectively implemented around the world. Our board and staff have engaged in discussions and expert panels to provide insight and lessons learned from the successful operations of GWRS.

The GWRS, while considered an indirect potable reuse project, paved the way for these new DPR regulations, allowing the industry and agencies statewide to recognize the water quality and public benefits of water reuse. GWRS is considered an IPR project because we take purified recycled water produced from the GWRS and inject it back into the



Orange County Groundwater Basin, our local groundwater basin that we have managed and protected for more than 90 years.

The GWRS recycles 100% of local reclaimable wastewater flows and provides a new, resilient water supply. About 130 million gallons of water is produced at the GWRS every day, which is recharged into the basin to increase our water supply. A portion of this water is injected into the groundwater basin along the coastline to prevent seawater from the Pacific Ocean from entering into the basin.

Once this water travels into the basin, it mixes with other sources, such as the Santa Ana River, stormwater, rainfall, and water imported from northern California and the Colorado River, and is eventually pumped out by OCWD's 19 cities and retail water districts, including the City of Fullerton, and served to you.

Already well established in Orange County, recycling wastewater is a tremendous effort that will continue to shape the future of water management. If you would like to see firsthand how it's all done, we invite you to learn more about the award-winning [GWRS](#) and take a [tour](#) of our facility. We hope to welcome you 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.

