



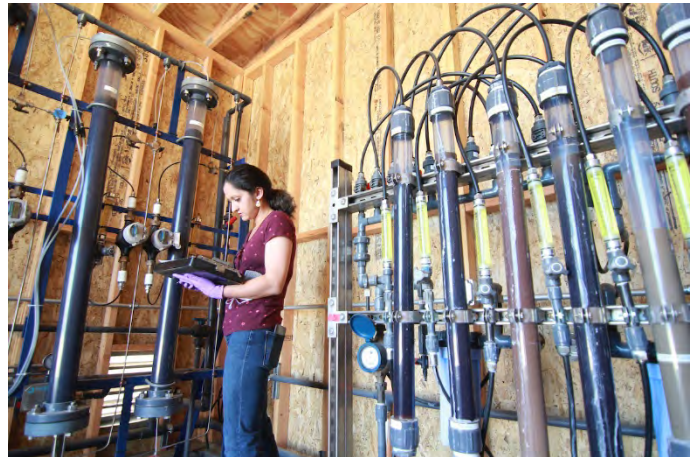
Addressing PFAS in the Orange County Groundwater Basin

With the State of California “Re-opening” or unlocking its economy last month, the rest of 2021 is already shaping up to be quite a year – and we’re only halfway through it! We’re treading a positive path and looking forward to what’s to come. The same could be said about water in Orange County.

While news about the drought and water shortages made headlines over the past couple of months, your water providers in Orange County were planning and preparing for these regularly recurring events. Challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and drought have put our resiliency to the test, and our local water agencies never missed a beat. For example- an additional challenge that came to light recently is the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in our water. These are a group of thousands of manmade chemicals that were once used in consumer products such as Teflon pans, stain resistant carpets and fast-food packaging.

Due to their prolonged use, PFAS are being detected in water sources throughout the United States, including the Orange County Groundwater Basin (Basin). PFAS has entered via the Santa Ana River (SAR) whose flows infiltrate into the Basin. Much of this water originates from treated wastewater discharges and stormwater runoff from upstream communities in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

In a proactive and swift response to address PFAS, the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) launched and implemented the nation’s largest pilot project to evaluate effective treatment technologies and design and build 25 treatment facilities throughout the county to remove PFAS in the Basin. I’m excited to share with you that Orange County’s first PFAS treatment plant has [come online for the City of Fullerton](#), where it treats up to 3,000 gallons of water per minute--- more than 4.3 million gallons per day.



OCWD launched the nation’s largest PFAS pilot testing program to remove PFAS found in the Orange County Groundwater Basin. Orange County water agencies continue to provide safe and dependable drinking water that continually meet all state and federal drinking water standards.

Water agencies are not responsible for releasing PFAS into the environment, but we’re working hard to find effective treatment solutions so we can fully utilize the Basin again, which we anticipate will be within the next two years. Bringing these facilities online means we can continue to rely on locally controlled groundwater as our primary source of drinking water, which is much less expensive and more reliable than imported water.

Additionally, the District and 10 Orange County public water agencies, including the City of Fullerton, have also filed a lawsuit against the manufacturers of PFAS, seeking to protect ratepayers and ensure that the associated costs, including but not limited to treatment and replacement water, are borne by the companies that developed and manufactured PFAS.

It is our top priority to ensure the water we provide continues to meet or exceed all state and federal drinking water standards. OCWD performs more than 400,000 analyses of approximately 20,000 water samples each year using state-of-the-art lab equipment that can detect minerals and compounds down to parts per trillion concentrations – that’s like finding one drop of PFAS in 20 Olympic-sized pools.

OCWD and the City of Fullerton provide some of the cleanest drinking water in the world, and we are committed to ensuring that the community is knowledgeable and has the resources available to understand local water quality. You can read more about this and learn all about your local water supply in the annual water quality report, commonly referred to as the Consumer Confidence Report, which is available online at [Fullerton’s water service webpage](#).

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about OCWD’s comprehensive and robust PFAS response, please visit the [District’s PFAS resource webpage](#).

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.