Orange County Water Agencies Prepared During Wet and Dry Years

Orange County is considered a semi-arid region that receives approximately 13 inches of rainfall on an annual basis. Because of this, we can't fully rely on Mother Nature to provide for the entirety of our communities' water needs, however, when it does rain, we are ready and strive to capture everything we possibly can to store for future availability.

Whether we are experiencing wet or dry times, Orange County water agencies are prepared to maximize water supply for the region. This entails many initiatives such as sustainable groundwater management, expanding water recycling, increasing stormwater capture efforts, leveraging technology and science to optimize our water systems, maintaining, and further investing in our water infrastructure, and more.

December brought a total of 2.52 inches of rainfall, as measured at the Orange County Water District's (OCWD) field headquarters in Anaheim and as of January 20th, we've already seen 12.98 inches of rain. We work diligently to capture as much water as possible as it eventually flows through the District's advanced aquifer recharge system, consisting of more than two dozen recharge basins, and naturally percolates into the Orange County Groundwater Basin (Basin), increasing drinking water supplies for 2.5 million people in the region.

Rubber dams help control Santa Ana River water flows that eventually reach the Orange County Groundwater Basin.

The United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) operates Prado Dam in Corona, CA with a primary purpose of flood risk management. Water conservation, referred to as 'stormwater capture' in California, is a secondary benefit of Prado Dam. USACE and OCWD successfully collaborate to maximize the water supply benefit of Santa Ana River water that reaches Prado Dam. With the storms that have occurred since November 1, 2022, OCWD has captured an estimated 33,000 acre-feet of river water, enough for 264,000 people annually. That 33,000 acre-feet would cost us more than $28.2 million annually if purchased as untreated imported water!

The District has increased stormwater capture efforts, which has proven to be an economical and effective solution to the region's water challenges without compromising the safety of the dam. Should we have multiple storms in a given year, this will help OCWD bank a significant

amount of water to help us get through future droughts and ensure we have enough supply in the long-term.

We are also committed to evaluating new technology such as Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) at Prado Dam which includes more precise weather forecasting, runoff modeling and watershed monitoring to help selectively retain or release water from the dam, all while improving water management for the region. This project will increase long-term water supply reliability by adding an additional 7,000 acre-feet of water annually into the groundwater basin, creating a new supply for approximately 60,000 people per year.

We are thankful for the rain we receive, but we will always look for opportunities to increase local water supplies and ensure a sufficient supply of water for generations to come. For more information about your local water supply, please visit the OCWD website.

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