



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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City Council Approves Demonstration Water Recycling Project

Vote Paves the Way for Future Indirect Potable Reuse for San Diego

SAN DIEGO, CA – The San Diego City Council voted 5-3 Monday to approve a water rate increase to fund a pilot demonstration facility that will use highly treated wastewater to augment local reservoirs. If the pilot project is successful, it could result in a larger Indirect Potable Reuse (IPR) project that will help reduce San Diego's reliance on imported drinking water, safeguard San Diego's water future and decrease sewage discharges to the ocean.

The vote came after the City, as required under Proposition 218, provided the public with a notice of the proposed rate increase and an opportunity to protest the increase via mail or in person up to the time of Monday's hearing. Under 6,000 protests were lodged of approximately 274,000 mailed. This total is comparable to previous rate notices, including the notice sent concurrently to raise water rates to reflect increased wholesale water purchase costs from the County Water Authority. The protests were far less than the more than 137,000 needed to stop the increase.

"The public is becoming increasingly aware of the need to explore all options to enhance our local water supplies," commented Coastkeeper's Executive Director Bruce Reznik, "and we were gratified that so few protests came in. Even so, we applaud the City for building in significant funding for community outreach as part of the demonstration project."

Of the \$11,811,000 budgeted for the IPR demonstration project, including costs for project management and an Independent Advisory Panel, \$1.7M was allocated for Public Education.

The City can now use the funds allocated from the rate increase, which will go into effect on January 1, to seek approval from the Department of Public Health to move ahead with the demonstration project. A similar IPR project has been implemented in Orange County and is producing 70 million gallons per day, enough water for 500,000 residents.

“A successful water reuse project has been online in Orange County since the beginning of the year and Los Angeles is considering a similar project,” noted Coastkeeper’s Legal Director Gabriel Solmer. “The rate increase will bring San Diego one step closer to following their lead and realizing our goal of water independence and security.”

Because IPR, which must meet stringent federal and state drinking water standards, will provide a cost-effective, drought-proof supply of water for the region, the project has found support in a variety of groups. Supporters include not only the environmental community, but dozens of industry and taxpayer groups (including the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and San Diego County Taxpayers Association), municipalities, water districts and commissions.

If the demonstration project is successful, a full-scale project could ultimately provide up to 16 million gallons per day (MGD) of advanced treated water from the North City reclamation facility to augment the San Vicente Reservoir (a local drinking water source), as envisioned in the City’s 2005 *Water Reuse Study*. The option (NC-3) outlined in the study that is supported by Coastkeeper and other environmental groups would provide a mix of potable and non-potable uses, including the San Vicente reservoir augmentation project. The study concluded that, “[t]his strategy [NC-3] appears to be the appropriate choice if the driving decision factors are to *maximize recycled water use* and have the *lowest ultimate unit cost*.”

“San Diego still imports over 80% of its water from sources that are steadily declining, including the Colorado River and San Joaquin Delta,” added Reznik. “We need to move aggressively on conservation and water recycling to ensure the region’s long-term security, vitality and economic stability.”

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Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region’s bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. We balance community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.