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Camp Pendleton unveils system to reuse treated wastewater

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Camp Pendleton officials Wednesday formally dedicated an upgraded water treatment system that includes one of Southern California's most ambitious uses of recycled water.

As part of a $48.8-million upgrade, treated wastewater will now be used on landscaping, horse pastures and the base golf course. Plans are to expand the water use to carwashes and to toilet facilities in enlisted quarters.

"We're going to continue to march ahead: This is the first step," said Marine Col. Gary Storey.

The goal is to decrease the amount of fresh water used on the sprawling base and the amount of so-called gray water pumped into the Pacific Ocean.

The base has been under court order to improve its treatment facilities. Like much of the base's infrastructure, the water system dates back to the 1940s and '50s.

The base uses 6,000 to 7,000 acre-feet of water each year, most of it from wells and the San Luis Rey River. An acre-foot of water is enough for two families for a year.

The facilities unveiled Wednesday have a capacity to provide 1,700 acre-feet a year of treated wastewater to sites throughout the base. The primary contractor on the project was CDM, based in Cambridge, Mass.

-- Tony Perry