



## More water will be available

**PROJECTS:** It is hoped a new plant in Hemet and a plant expansion in Perris will increase supplies.

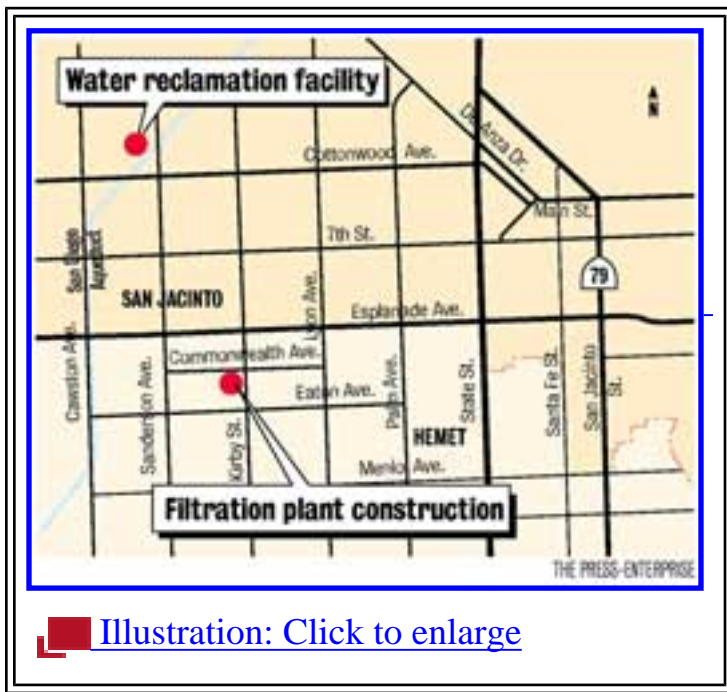
**01:30 AM PST on Sunday, February 26, 2006**

By **GAIL WESSON / The Press-Enterprise**

As the San Jacinto Valley grows, so does the demand for drinking water.

The Eastern Municipal Water District is responding by building the Hemet Water Filtration Plant to increase the availability of treated tap water imported from Northern California.

Eastern, a regional agency headquartered in Perris, also is expanding an existing filtration plant in Perris that serves an area from southern Moreno Valley to Sun City.



 [Illustration: Click to enlarge](#)

Historically, the central and Southwest Riverside County areas have been served by water treatment plants operated by Los Angeles-based Metropolitan Water District. But with the growth spurt, Eastern

has undertaken projects to increase the supply and keep water flowing as demand increases.

It also wants to be prepared if other treatment plants are briefly shut down for maintenance.

"We're kind of diversifying our water supply portfolio," Mike Garner, Eastern's assistant general manager for resource development, said by phone.

By adding one more source of water, the district is ensuring it will have enough water for customers during peak times, he said.

During peak demand last summer, the district pumped 90 percent of the available water supply to its San Jacinto Valley customers, though it would have preferred to keep 20 percent available in storage, Peter Odencrans, Eastern senior public affairs officer, said by phone.

The Hemet plant on Commonwealth Avenue is expected to be in operation in August. It will have a 10 million-gallon-a-day treatment capacity.

Archer Western Contractors of San Diego is overseeing the \$38 million project, which is being financed with a federal loan. The State Water Resources Control Board makes the loans to high-priority projects. The district is spending another \$2 million for a pipeline that links the plant to a Metropolitan pipeline that brings in water from Northern California.

The cities of Hemet and San Jacinto and Lake Hemet Municipal Water District supplement their groundwater supplies by buying water from Eastern.

But much of the valley's growth has been in areas served by Eastern.

The number of residential water meters in Eastern's San Jacinto Valley service area has increased from 8,099 residential meters in 2001 to 12,395 meters in 2005, an almost 35 percent increase, according to district figures.

Groundwater doesn't need as much treatment as imported water from the State Water Project or Colorado River.

At the filtration plants, the imported water goes through a process where impurities and contaminants, such as certain minerals and salts, are trapped by a membrane. State and federal laws require the more extensive treatment.

The 3-year-old Perris plant, which should be finished in late November, is being doubled in size to treat 20 million gallons a day.

Western Summit Constructors in Vista is building the \$23 million project.

The plant uses Colorado River water, but a future pipeline will connect the plant to a pipe near Lake Perris that supplies Northern California water.

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