EMWD Leads Regional CWAD Coalition

In January 2018, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) submitted its formal request to the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board for the formation of the San Jacinto Coalition, which will assist more than 40 agricultural customers in meeting the requirements detailed in the new Conditional Waiver for Agricultural Discharge (CWAD).

By creating a regional coalition, EMWD is able to serve its agricultural customers and allow its end-users to meet the new requirements in a cost-effective and streamlined manner.

The CWAD applies to agricultural operations of more than 20 acres, and is designed to reduce or prevent runoff from agricultural operations in the San Jacinto Watershed for both surface and groundwater. EMWD will serve as the coordinating agency, monitoring water quality effects from discharges to the groundwater and assisting in reporting collective discharges for the recycled water customers and citrus growers who have signed up to participate in the coalition.

EMWD has extensive experience in groundwater monitoring, making EMWD well-positioned to use its existing resources to assist in fulfilling the CWAD regulatory requirements.

“As a regional agency, EMWD felt it was appropriate to form a coalition to support our customers in meeting these new regulatory requirements,” said Al Javier, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Compliance for EMWD. “We are proud to work on behalf of our agricultural customers and to make this process more customer-driven and reduce costs for the end-users who participate in this coalition.”
Assessments Help EMWD, Customers Improve Efficiency

In late 2017, EMWD conducted a series of irrigation assessments at various agricultural sites throughout its service area. The research was led by Dr. Charles M. Burt, of the Irrigation Training and Research Center at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. The assessments provided on-the-ground analysis of irrigation equipment, crop uniformity, aerial footage to measure irrigation patterns, and a written summary that was provided to all participants of the study’s findings.

The program was funded by the United States Bureau of Reclamation and designed to provide insight on ways that EMWD can better serve its agricultural customers, including recommended upgrades to EMWD’s infrastructure.

EMWD will be applying for multiple grants to help fund the upgrades and resources necessary to increase efficiencies. Current efforts underway include creating a customer portal to monitor real-time water use, a recycled water distribution system optimization study, and reducing chlorine levels from the wastewater treatment plants.
Local Agriculture Benefits from Recycled Water

For George Cordero and C & R Farms, the economics of recycled water make perfect business sense.

Cordero, whose family-owned farm has been growing fruits and vegetables in the San Jacinto and Menifee valleys since 1971, says recycled water provides a cost-effective resource that helps promote sustainability and saves money when compared to other water supply sources.

“It’s very important,” Cordero said. “It’s an important resource, both economically and water-wise.”

EMWD provides services to many of the properties Cordero farms own—including highly-treated recycled water, which is safe for food crops and is less than the cost of potable water.

C & R Farms owns or leases approximately 1,400 acres of farmland in the area, where it grows watermelons, pumpkins, and carrots. The produce is sold to grocery chains throughout California, Utah, and Arizona—including Stater Bros., Albertsons, Trader Joe’s, Wal-Mart, Costco, and WinCo. The company employs approximately 150 seasonal and full-time workers.

For more than three decades, C & R Farms has implemented a variety of water-efficient practices to make certain it is using its resources as responsibly as possible, including the use of drip-tape and systems with check valves to limit water waste on its fields.

“We are always looking at ways to be more efficient and more productive per acre,” Cordero said. For more information about EMWD’s Recycled Water Program, visit us online at emwd.org.
Regional Programs Focus on Groundwater Reliability

EMWD is working to make its local groundwater basins more sustainable so that all users can benefit from increased groundwater levels and improved water quality.

This year, EMWD anticipates breaking ground on new infrastructure for a Water Banking program. The project—funded in large part by external grants—will involve the construction of percolation ponds, new groundwater extraction wells, and pipelines in the San Jacinto Valley.

During wet or average years, water imported from the State Water Project system will be piped into the San Jacinto Valley and placed into percolation ponds, where it will enter our local groundwater basin. The water will be stored in the local aquifer until it is needed during summer months or during long-term droughts, when it will then be extracted for drinking water purposes.

Because EMWD is using low-salinity State Water Project water, it will provide long-term salinity reduction benefits to the local groundwater basin. Higher groundwater levels also reduce pumping costs for all users, including agricultural customers that rely on the basin for irrigation purposes.

EMWD is also expanding its Groundwater Desalination program in the west half of its service area. This program includes additional desalter wells and a planned third desalination facility. EMWD exports more than 25,000 tons of salt annually through its Desalination program, which helps create long-term basin sustainability and allows for the use of recycled water in those areas by creating a salt offset program.