



OMWD Receives \$650,000 in Grant Funding to Further Study Expansion of Its Local Water Supplies

Encinitas, CA—Olivenhain Municipal Water District received notice yesterday that it has been awarded \$650,000 in grant funding from California’s Department of Water Resources to continue exploring the feasibility of brackish groundwater desalination in the San Dieguito Valley.

In an effort to boost water supply in the wake of the state’s historic, five-year drought, DWR awarded Proposition 1 funding to nine projects throughout California. OMWD’s award will facilitate the design and construction of a test well and field testing of treatment technologies for its San Dieguito Valley Brackish Groundwater Desalination Design Pilot.

Should results remain positive following the design pilot testing, OMWD intends to proceed with an environmental impact analysis and construction of a brackish groundwater desalination project. The potential desalination project would extract groundwater from wells located in the San Dieguito Valley Groundwater Basin and deliver it to a nearby desalination facility. Treated through reverse osmosis, a filtration process that improves water quality by removing impurities such as salts, hardness, and other dissolved minerals, the water would be available for uses like drinking, sanitation, and fire protection, without adversely impacting the environment or current water users. The project would also provide water supply redundancy should imported supplies be cut off.

The minimum project goal is to generate a potable water supply of at least 1 million gallons per day, enough to provide the water needs of over 2,000 families of four. The cost of the water produced must also be competitive with projected imported water rates and other feasible local supply development projects in order for the project to move forward.

“The development of a local, sustainable water source is becoming increasingly important as imported water costs continue to rise and water availability becomes more uncertain,” said OMWD Board Director Bob Topolovac. “This project would lessen OMWD’s heavy reliance on imported water, increasing reliability for our ratepayers.”

OMWD has conducted a series of studies by which to determine the viability of extraction and treatment of brackish groundwater within OMWD’s service area. In September 2014, OMWD was successful in achieving \$250,000 in grant funds to conduct a feasibility study in the San Dieguito Basin to evaluate its potential as a new local water supply via brackish groundwater desalination. Study results were favorable in terms of sustainable yield, water quality, brine management considerations, the ability to complete a project while avoiding significant environmental impacts, and consistency with existing local and regional water management plans.

Once all data from the design pilot is analyzed, OMWD’s board will decide whether the project moves forward. With board approval, OMWD could begin producing a new, locally sourced drinking water supply as early as 2022.

To learn more about OMWD’s efforts to explore groundwater desalination as a potential local source of potable water, visit www.olivenhain.com/groundwater.