

Program Benefits

OVERVIEW

Recycled water is becoming increasingly necessary to preserve our limited potable water supplies. The South County Ag program proposes to use tertiary-treated recycled water to irrigate permanent agriculture lands and habitat mitigation lands in the south part of Sacramento County. The program includes new recycled water transmission and distribution pipelines and treatment, pumping, and storage facilities. The recycled water will be produced from treated wastewater at the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant near Elk Grove. In addition to benefiting growers and habitat lands in the south county, the program will offer broad regional benefits as our local communities struggle to meet growing water demands with dwindling supply. The amount of potable water that could be saved is equivalent to the water needed to serve about 100,000 homes annually.

The program is flexible and can be built in phases to facilitate its financing and constructability. In a best-case scenario, design could be completed between 2015 and 2020, followed by construction and startup as early as 2023. Two areas of land south of Elk Grove and north of the Cosumnes River, which feature 42,000 acres, are good candidates to receive recycled water. These are the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the southernmost portion of Sacramento County.

IRRIGATION FOR AGRICULTURE AND HABITAT LANDS

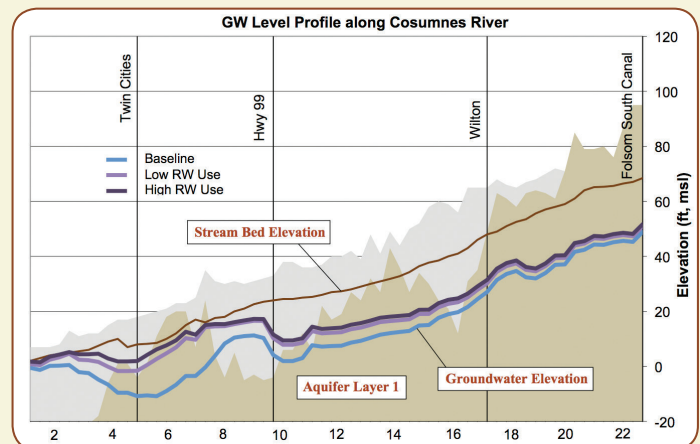
The program will provide a safe, sustainable water supply for irrigation of agriculture and habitat lands. The program also provides up to 52,000 acre-feet per year of recycled water to irrigate up to 18,000 acres of agriculture and habitat lands. Tertiary-treated recycled water is highly treated water and is safe for irrigating agriculture and habitat mitigation lands.

SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION

Groundwater is currently the primary source of water, meeting agricultural and urban water demand in the south county. Less demand on surface water and less pumping of groundwater will help restore the natural flow to the Cosumnes River and other area waterways.

Extensive pumping of groundwater causes more water to be pulled down from the Cosumnes River into the depressed groundwater basin, causing decreased stream flows. This “hydraulic separation” of the river and groundwater basin has also resulted in dewatering of important wetlands and habitat.

The program will help conserve and protect precious surface water and groundwater supplies by reducing dependence on those resources. Recycled water use could help raise groundwater levels enough to help bring increased flows back to the river, providing environmental benefits for both the river and its riparian corridor. With area groundwater levels low, modeling studies show that use of recycled water will help recharge the groundwater basin, potentially bringing a 20-30 foot rise in groundwater elevation.



WATER RECYCLING GOALS

Recycled water helps communities and water resource managers meet growing water demands. It also helps to meet local, regional, state and federal water recycling goals and is compatible with all allowed uses of recycled water.

SAFE AND DROUGHT-PROOF WATER SUPPLY

Recycled water is “drought-proof,” providing a water supply that is both reliable and sustainable year-round. The inflow of wastewater to the treatment plant remains fairly constant throughout the year, ensuring a plentiful supply of recycled water would always be available.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- Helps balance regional water supply during periods of high demand or low supply.
- South county lands utilizing recycled water will be better positioned to face a water-scarce future.
- Meets strict water recycling criteria contained in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.
- Meets all applicable state and federal water quality laws.
- Recycled water has a long history of safe use in California and the United States.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS AT-A-GLANCE

- Provides a stable water supply for irrigation of agriculture and habitat mitigation lands
- Augments regional water supplies
- Raises the groundwater elevation in the Sacramento Central Groundwater Basin
- Promotes wildlife habitat
- Benefits Delta ecosystem restoration
- Reduces discharge of treated effluent to the Sacramento River

PRINCIPAL STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to local growers, this program already has broad support from a diverse stakeholder coalition that hopes to benefit from increased use of recycled water:

- Ducks Unlimited
- Sierra Club
- City of Elk Grove
- County of Sacramento
- The Nature Conservancy
- Regional Water Authority
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Friends of the Swainson’s Hawk
- Sacramento Area Creeks Council
- Sacramento County Farm Bureau
- Sacramento County Water Agency
- Southgate Recreation & Park District
- Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
- Sacramento Water Recycling Coalition
- Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority
- Sacramento County League of Women Voters
- Cosumnes River Preserve

For more information about the Water Recycling Program, please visit www.regionalsan.com/south-county-ag-program or contact Terrie Mitchell at mitchellt@sacsewer.com or (916) 876-6092.