

## NEW WATER FILTRATION PLANT BREAKS GROUND

### Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD)



In its ongoing effort to develop a sustainable and reliable local water supply, the Santa Margarita Water District broke ground and is constructing its first drinking water treatment plant. The Ranch Water Filtration Plant will treat groundwater from the San Juan Basin to supply some 1.6 billion gallons of drinking water per year to customers.

The new plant means a local source of drinking water whereas, right now, all of the District's water is imported from hundreds of miles away, from northern California and the Colorado River.

The Ranch Water Filtration Plant will be located near the confluence of Ortega Highway and Antonio Parkway and on the same property near the Chiquita Water Reclamation Plant in south Orange County. The plant is estimated to cost roughly \$10 million to build and will begin its first phase of operation in early 2024.

An existing pipeline will carry the water from wells in the basin to the plant. Initially, the plant will supply about 2.9 million gallons of drinking water per year from treated groundwater. Treatment will include ultra or microfiltration, reverse osmosis, UV disinfection, and chloramination to meet all drinking water standards.

Additionally, SMWD plans to recharge the San Juan groundwater basin with recycled water to bring the amount of water available for treatment up to 1.6 billion gallons per year, about 20 percent of the District's drinking water supply. The Santa Margarita Board of Directors set a goal to diversify its water supply by 2030 by accomplishing three objectives: create a local drinking water supply; recycle 100 percent of its wastewater; and establish a six-month supply of drinking water stored in the service area for an emergency.

The 30 percent of our drinking water locally sourced goal provides the District with more control as far as cost is concerned. It also helps ensure that we have water in emergency situations. That 30 percent is in the range of customers' indoor water use, so in an emergency, people could take showers and have water to drink. The Ranch Water Filtration Plant is a key element in reaching that goal.

The District currently serves roughly 7.8 billion gallons of drinking water per year, all of which is imported. It recycles about 2.2 billion gallons per year for irrigation construction and other uses. In late 2020, SMWD completed Orange County's largest recycled water reservoir--the Trampas Canyon Dam and Reservoir--which will ultimately store over 1.6 billion gallons of recycled water. The Trampas facility moves the District closer to its goal of recycling and reusing all of its wastewater.

SMWD supplies water to more than 170,000 residents in southern Orange County in the eastern portion of Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, and the unincorporated communities of Coto de Caza, Las Flores, Ladera Ranch, Sendero, and Esencia as well as the remaining undeveloped portion of Rancho Mission Viejo.