



Media Release

San Bernardino project to secure safe drinking water breaks ground with help of \$10.2 million state grant

Consolidation will strengthen, expand system serving over 10,000 in three disadvantaged communities

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CALIMESA, CA— The State Water Resources Control Board joined the South Mesa Water Co., Riverside County, CalMutuals, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency last Friday to mark the groundbreaking of a major construction project that will strengthen and expand the region’s drinking water system. The project received a more than \$10 million grant from the State Water Board.

Serving a population of about 10,000 in the disadvantaged communities of Yucaipa and Calimesa in Riverside County, South Mesa Water Co. relies on several aging groundwater wells and distribution water mains that are undersized. Expected to be completed in 2026, the project will improve the system’s integrity by drilling a new groundwater well and replacing water mains to meet current and future demand. Once complete, South Mesa will connect the failing water system serving nearby Hillcrest Mobile Estates, a severely disadvantaged community with about 500 residents that is struggling with nitrate contamination, to its distribution line.

To make the project feasible, the State Water Board awarded South Mesa a grant of over \$10.2 million on Dec. 14, 2023, through the [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience program](#), a suite of tools that the board uses to assist disadvantaged communities struggling with failing drinking water systems.

The board has also worked closely with the San Bernardino County Environmental Health Service Local Primacy Agency—delegated by the board to regulate all public water systems within their jurisdiction—to address the nitrate contamination issues at Hillcrest Mobile Estates. To facilitate this effort, the board’s SAFER program has consulted with Hillcrest residents since 2018 about the benefits of consolidation and ultimately facilitated a voluntary partnership with South Mesa Water Co.

“Only together can we fulfill the human right to water for all Californians, because of the complexity of drinking water solutions and legacies of disinvestment in many of our small communities. Close collaboration is required to overcome the challenges presented,” said Nichole Morgan, a State Water Board member. “And, as this project



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demonstrates, by helping our neighbors we help ourselves. Consolidating with a nearby community can increase reliability and also diversify the water supply, so I congratulate these water agencies for doing what is right but also best for Yucaipa and Calimesa.”

South Mesa Water Co.’s permanent interconnection with Hillcrest will provide the residents with safe drinking water consistently and well into the future. The smaller community will also benefit from the far more robust technical, managerial and financial capacities of South Mesa Water Co. Combining the resources of the two systems mutually benefits each by improving their shared economic and environmental resiliency, especially in the face of the changing climate.

"As a mutual water company serving a severely disadvantaged community, it is our duty to ensure clean, affordable and reliable water for our shareholders," said South Mesa Water Co. General Manager Dave Armstrong. "This grant gives us the opportunity to extend that benefit to the Hillcrest Mobile Home Park through consolidation while making proactive investments in our local water infrastructure and supply. The grant additionally helps support our involvement in the creation of a new regional recharge basin and gives us access to State Water Project supplies, expanding the resiliency of our water for future generations."

The State Water Board’s mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.



The SAFER Program includes projects funded by the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, which is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment—particularly in disadvantaged communities.