



# Media Release

## **State-funded Santa Cruz County recycling facility will protect drinking water, build resilience to sea-level rise**

***Water Board provided over \$90 million for Pure Water Soquel efforts***

Oct. 3, 2024

Contact: [Ailene Voisin](#), Information Officer

**SACRAMENTO** – The State Water Resources Control Board today joined the Soquel Creek Water District to celebrate the completion of a purification center that will replenish groundwater and prevent further seawater intrusion in the critically overdrafted Santa Cruz mid-county basin.

The board contributed more than \$90 million to the [Pure Water Soquel](#) wastewater recycling project, which included a \$65 million grant from its [Prop. 1 Groundwater Program](#) and a \$25 million loan from its [Seawater Intrusion Control Program](#). The project also received a federal grant for \$89 million from the [Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act \(WIFIA\) program](#), a federal credit program administered by US EPA for eligible water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The total cost of the project is approximately \$150 million.

Historically, more water is extracted from the basin than is restored by rainfall, resulting in a supply shortage, especially during drought. This allows seawater to move inland and contaminate groundwater – the district's only drinking water source.

The new structure will pump already treated wastewater to a new purification center, where it will undergo a state-of-the-art, multi-step process that uses ozone, microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with advanced oxidation. The clean, near-distilled water will then be stored underground to replenish the basin and provide drinking water for more than 40,000 residents who currently rely exclusively on groundwater for their needs. Recharging the basin also creates a barrier against further seawater intrusion, preventing saltwater from moving into freshwater aquifers and degrading groundwater quality.

"Pure Water Soquel is a great example of a multi-benefit water recycling project that will boost groundwater supplies, reduce wastewater discharges to Monterey Bay and shield from the harmful effects of sea level rise," said E. Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. "Expanding water recycling projects beyond major cities is a critical component of California's plan to protect its water resources from



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • [www.waterboards.ca.gov](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov)



climate change impacts. We are eager to support local leaders who are using water recycling as a tool to diversify their communities' water supplies and build resilience."

Increasing wastewater recycling capabilities is a key piece of Gov. Gavin Newsom's [Water Supply Strategy](#) for adapting to a hotter, drier future. Over the past three fiscal years, California has provided \$1.4 billion in assistance for water recycling projects that, when complete, will generate about 245,000 acre-feet per year of additional water, or about half the capacity of Millerton Lake, located near the city of Fresno. These efforts also support the governor's "[build more, faster](#)" agenda to deliver infrastructure upgrades across the state

Today's event, which was held at Pure Water Soquel's new facility in the Live Oak area of Santa Cruz County, just north of Capitola, featured several notable speakers, including Esquivel, U.S. Congressman Jimmy Panetta, Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley, U.S. EPA deputy assistant administrator Mae Wu, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Commissioner Roque T Sanchez and Soquel Creek Water District General Manager Melanie Mow Schumacher.

"The State Water Board's investment in the Pure Water Soquel Project is a true testament to the incredible support we've received to ensure our local water supply remains a reliable and vital resource for generations to come," said Schumacher. "We are grateful for the grant and loan from the board's programs and look forward to continuing our partnership with the state in achieving basin sustainability."

The facility is expected to begin operating early next year.

*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 present and future generations.*