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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY OF SAN FERNANDO CELEBRATES WATER INDEPENDENCE WITH “TURN OFF THE VALVE” CEREMONY

SAN FERNANDO, CA – The City of San Fernando is proud to celebrate a significant achievement in its ongoing commitment to sustainability and resilience. On Thursday, September 5, 2024, the City hosted a special event at the MWD Connection Facility in San Fernando to commemorate its return to water independence. Senator Caroline Menjivar and Metropolitan Water District (MWD) Board Chair Adán Ortega, Jr. joined San Fernando Mayor Celeste Rodriguez, Vice Mayor Mary Mendoza, and Councilmembers Victoria Garcia and Mary Solorio to ceremoniously “turn off the valve,” marking the City’s transition away from imported MWD water and back to self-reliance.



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“Today is an example of what can happen when the state and local government work together. Thanks to Senator Menjivar, our San Fernando team, and our membership with MWD, we have ensured that our residents have had safe drinking water and are now back to being water independent, as we have been since our founding in 1911. The Human Right to Water should be a reality for all our communities, and today, we celebrate accomplishing that in San Fernando.”
– Mayor Rodriguez.

The City of San Fernando’s journey toward water independence has been a testament to its dedication to sustainability and proactive infrastructure management. The City owns and operates four groundwater extraction wells that draw water from the Sylmar Groundwater Basin. With rights to extract up to 3,750 acre-feet per year, these wells have historically supplied approximately 2,900 acre-feet annually to meet the needs of the City’s 6,000 customer connections.

However, in 2007 and 2009, two wells were taken offline due to nitrate levels exceeding the state’s drinking water standards. To address these challenges, the City installed a nitrate removal and treatment system, developed by Envirogen Technologies, at one of the wells in 2018. In 2021, with state funding secured by State Senator Robert Hertzberg, the City Council approved the installation of a similar system for the second well, furthering its commitment to water quality and reliability.

In 2022, the City’s highest-producing well experienced a rise in nitrate levels, prompting a precautionary shutdown. This event marked the first time in over a decade that the City needed to rely on imported water from MWD. In response, Senator Caroline Menjivar secured \$3 million in state funding in July 2023 to enhance the City’s water infrastructure, including the construction of a nitrate treatment system for the City’s highest-producing well.

“These partnerships between cities and the state are vital to ensuring the people we represent have safe drinking water and the other necessary tools to thrive. It was a privilege to bring down \$3 million in state funds last year, and deliver on a key promise to my community, improving access to human basic needs. I look forward to continued collaboration with the City of San Fernando on future projects.” – Senator Menjivar

In March 2024, the received approval from the state Division of Drinking Water (DDW) to put the second treatment system into service. This allowed the City to extract enough groundwater to stop importing water from MWD and return to water independence.

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“As the City of San Fernando tirelessly worked to return to its local groundwater, Metropolitan is proud to have worked side by side with the City to deliver a supplemental water supply from the Colorado River,” said MWD Chair Ortega, who also serves as the City’s representative on the MWD board. “At a time where we are seeing the impacts of climate change on our imported sources, our goal is to empower our member agencies to develop their own local supplies and enhance their water resiliency.”

The City of San Fernando is already looking ahead, with design already underway for a final treatment system. This continued commitment to infrastructure improvement ensures that San Fernando will maintain its water independence and meet the needs of its residents for years to come.

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