

# SAN DIEGO NEWS ROOM

## San Diego's Progress with Wastewater Reuse

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### **Wastewater Recycling moves closer to reality in San Diego.**

San Diego could become the first California city to use treated wastewater to augment its reservoirs after the City Council voted 6-2 in favor of a contract for a demonstration project last Tuesday.

The \$6.6 million contract with Camp Dresser McKee includes the design, installation, testing and operation of a demonstration-scale Advanced Water Purification Facility at the North City Water Reclamation Plant.

San Diego currently imports over 80 percent of its water from sources that are steadily declining, such as the Colorado River and San Joaquin Delta. Proponents see this process, called indirect potable reuse (IPR), as a possible solution for San Diego's water problems.

"The more that we can develop local supplies, the more reliability we will have here in San Diego," said Toby Roy, a water resources manager with the San Diego County Water Authority who has been involved in the city's IPR effort.

The water recycling system has been supported by the IPR Coalition, an alliance of San Diego environmental, business, labor, economic growth, technical and ratepayer advocates.

A press release from San Diego Coastkeeper, a member of the IPR Coalition, stated that IPR could provide "a safe, reliable, drought-proof and cost effective supply of local water that will help reduce San Diego's reliance on imported drinking water while improving the environment by decreasing sewage discharges to the ocean."

Roy explained that the city of San Diego and other agencies currently treat water to tertiary levels, meaning it is put through filters and can then be used for irrigation. At the Advanced Water Purification Facility, instead of being used for irrigation at this stage, some of the water will be put through further treatments, which will include membrane filtration, reverse osmosis and disinfection. From here it will go to a reservoir before being put through a drinking water treatment plant.

"It gets multiple levels of treatment and by the time it gets put in the reservoir, any elements of wastewater have been removed from the water so you have a fairly pure water going into your raw water supply," Roy explained.

A similar process is used to augment water supplies in Orange County. The only difference being the water in Orange County is put in the ground and in San Diego it will go to a reservoir.

"Orange County has been safely reclaiming 70 MGD of wastewater to augment its water supplies through groundwater injection for several years," Coastkeeper's Executive Director Bruce Reznik said. He added, "The AWP (Advanced Water Purification) will bring San Diego one step closer to following their lead and realizing our goal of water independence."

Coastkeeper notes that Virginia has been safely augmenting their reservoirs since 1978.

So why hasn't San Diego been doing this all along? Roy suggested public perception. "In San Diego the public hadn't really accepted it," she said.

Advocates of the IPR hope this pilot facility will continue to change that. The plan is to run a pilot facility at the North City Plant that uses the advanced treatment technologies. This pilot will then be used to get approval for the project from the California Department of Public Health other agencies.

The project has been a couple years in the making, as the City Council voted to proceed with the project in October of 2007 and approved a rate increase to fund the project in November 2008. This put the budget for the project at just over \$11.8 million, according to the City Council agenda.

“The AWP is just the first step in pursuing water reclamation in the region, “said Reznik. “We must stay engaged in monitoring the demonstration project and, if the AWP proves successful, advocating for full-scale implementation if we are to achieve the goal of water security for San Diego.”