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Federal Grant Expands Regional Groundwater Storage

New Facility Strengthens Climate Adaptability and Drinking Water Resources for Disadvantaged Communities

BEAUMONT, CA (May 13, 2024)—The United States Bureau of Reclamation awarded San Geronio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA) a \$400,000 WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grant in April to support drought resilience and clean water access for disadvantaged communities in the region. The grant funds SGPWA's Brookside West Recharge Facility and enhances the Agency's ability to store imported water and serve 80,000 residents.

Thanks to another wet year, SGPWA received more than 29,000 acre-feet per year from the State Water Project (SWP) in 2023. While the region's existing recharge capacity is around 20,000 acre-feet, it acquired 62 acres of land adjacent to its existing Brookside Recharge Facility to overcome this constraint. With the Bureau of Reclamation funding, the Agency can design a new Brookside West Recharge Facility to increase recharge capacity by around 9,000 acre-feet per year and help enable the area to import its full allocation.

"This funding enables SGPWA to increase the regional water supply, fortify water levels and prepare the area for the next drought," Mickey Valdivia, SGPWA Board President said. "Crucially, disadvantaged communities can thrive with improved water quality and long-term sustainability."

Of the tens of thousands of people the Brookside Recharge Facility serves, 39 percent are disadvantaged due to climate change issues, poverty and low-income households, transportation barriers and unemployment. Increasing recharge capacity will replenish local groundwater supplies, providing a stable water source for drinking, agriculture and other essential needs. The new facility also strengthens a drought-prone region with additional storage during wet periods, creating a reserve that can be tapped during dry spells.

The WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grant will help create a final design package for the Brookside West Recharge Facility that SGPWA can use to apply for construction funding. The Agency will leverage partnerships with the Riverside Flood Control District and the local Watermaster to complete the project.

This project addresses key challenges for Riverside County, including prolonged drought conditions and climate change effects. Over-extraction of groundwater for urban, agricultural,

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and industrial use has threatened groundwater resources. With expanded groundwater recharge capabilities, SGPWA can conduct long-term supply planning that bolsters local basins and the greater local use of the SWP.

WaterSMART funding opportunities allow the Bureau of Reclamation to work with states, tribes and local entities in the American West as they plan and increase water supply through investments to modernize existing infrastructure. Since January 2021, the Bureau of Reclamation has funded 666 projects with a total of \$292.6 million, in conjunction with \$2.2 billion in non-Federal funding, across the western states.

Learn more at www.sgpwa.com.

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About San Geronio Pass Water Agency

Formed in 1961, SGPWA is a State Water Contractor that serves a 225-square-mile area of western Riverside County. The service area includes the cities of Calimesa, Beaumont, and Banning, and the communities of Cherry Valley, Cabazon, and the Banning Bench. In addition to importing State Water Project (SWP) water from Northern California to augment local groundwater sources, the Agency builds local system infrastructure, participates in water transfers, partners in statewide water projects and collaborates on regional water reliability and conservation efforts.

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