



SAN GORGONIO PASS
WATER AGENCY
A California State Water Project Contractor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Partnership Delivers One-Million-Gallon Reservoir to Banning Heights

Project Expands Regional Heli-Hydrant Network for Faster Fire Response

BEAUMONT, CA (July 1, 2026) – More than 50 community leaders and water professionals gathered on June 11, 2026, to celebrate the ribbon-cutting of Banning Heights Mutual Water Company's (BHMWC) new one-million-gallon reservoir. This major addition to the community's water system will provide reliable drinking water and strengthen wildfire response in the hills above Banning.

"This reservoir represents neighbors looking out for one another and agencies stepping up to solve challenges together," said Robert Ybarra, Board President of San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA). "When wildfire threatens our communities, or families turn on the tap, this resource will be there doing its job. That is what public service is all about."

The new reservoir expands drinking water storage for the 552 people who rely on BHMWC for their drinking water and will support SGPWA's regional Heli-Hydrant network, providing rapid refill access for firefighting helicopters during wildfires. The planned Banning Heights Heli-Hydrant site will serve Banning, Banning Heights, Banning Canyon and the Morongo region. The location was selected based on lessons from the 2020 Apple Fire, which burned more than 33,000 acres nearby and forced widespread evacuations.

"Every family we serve will benefit from this project," said BHMWC Board President Steve Romberg. "For a small mutual water company, completing a project like this is a tremendous achievement. It gives our community greater water security and strengthens our ability to respond to emergencies. We're grateful to every partner who helped make it possible."

The project was supported by a \$3.756 million Department of Water Resources grant and gap funding from SGPWA, which kept construction moving while grant reimbursements were processed.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony featured remarks from leaders representing the Department of Water Resources, the City of Banning, CalMutuals, BHMWC and SGPWA while recognizing project partners, including the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the California Rural Water Association's Small Systems Water Assistance Program. The reservoir's hunter green finish, selected by the BHMWC Board of Directors, also drew praise throughout the ceremony and quickly became a favorite talking point among guests.

Speakers called the project an important step toward a safer, more resilient Pass area, bolstering both residents and first responders.

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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.