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Recharge Basin Completed in Record Time, Securing Water for 18,000 Residents

CALIMESA, CA (October 27, 2026) – For the first time in Calimesa's history, imported water is flowing into a new groundwater recharge basin, marking a major milestone for regional water reliability. Completed just one year after breaking ground, the County Line Road Recharge Basin and Turnout Project reflects an ambitious partnership among San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (San Bernardino Valley), South Mesa Water Company, and Riverside County Fifth District Supervisor Dr. Yxstian Gutierrez.

On October 14, more than 90 water leaders, elected officials and community stakeholders gathered to celebrate the achievement. With imported water already filling the basin behind them, attendees witnessed the results of a regional collaboration that will help protect water supplies for approximately 18,000 residents.

"People see water flowing into this basin today, but think about what it took to get here," said San Bernardino Valley Chief Executive Officer and General Manager Heather Dyer. "Just a month ago, this water was in Lake Oroville. It traveled more than 500 miles through California's water system to reach this community. And behind that journey are relatively small teams of dedicated people doing extraordinary work. I am so proud of what our agencies have accomplished and what it means for the families who will depend on this water."

"This project is proof of what becomes possible when agencies trust one another enough to think beyond their own boundaries," said SGPWA Board President Robert Ybarra. "Every partner brought something essential, and none of us could have delivered this project alone. We have built something that will serve our communities for decades because four partners were willing to work toward the same goal."

Located at 4th Street and County Line Road, the project includes a seven-acre recharge basin, a new turnout connecting to the East Branch Extension of the State Water Project and a repurposed 14-inch pipeline that delivers imported water to the basin. The facilities can recharge up to 479 million gallons annually, allowing water to seep underground and replenish the Yucaipa Subbasin, where years of severe drought have depleted groundwater reserves. By capturing and storing water during wet years, the project will strengthen the subbasin's sustainable yield, protect long-term water supplies for local homes and businesses, and give SGPWA greater flexibility to direct imported water to communities throughout the Pass area during dry periods.

"Just look at the water filling this basin behind us. That is imported water reaching Calimesa for the first time in our history," said South Mesa Water Company General Manager David Armstrong. "As a bedrock of California Mutual Water Companies, that is an extraordinary moment. We now have another way to protect the groundwater our customers depend on, and it happened because our partners recognized what we could accomplish by working together."

The project's success required exceptional coordination. South Mesa Water Company's state-funded pipeline replacement project made existing water mains available for regional use. SGPWA's gap funding program helped the company pay project expenses while awaiting state grant reimbursements, allowing the pipeline work to proceed. San Bernardino Valley helped make the new turnout possible, while SGPWA helped bring the partners and infrastructure together to deliver the regional project. Supervisor Gutierrez and the Riverside County Board of Supervisors directed \$3.1 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding toward the project's original \$6.2 million cost.

The ceremony drew statewide water leadership, including Adán Ortega, Jr., Executive Director of the California Association of Mutual Water Companies (CalMutuals) and Board Chair of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, who delivered featured remarks. Metropolitan Board Vice Chair Michael Camacho was also in attendance.

"Access to water is a human right, and small water systems are not charity cases. They are essential partners in delivering that right," said Ortega. "SGPWA understood that helping a small system overcome a funding barrier could unlock something much larger for the region. Its gap funding program helped make this project possible, and these project partners are setting an example for water agencies across California. When we give small systems the tools to succeed, entire regions benefit."

Supervisor Gutierrez attended the celebration and presented proclamations recognizing the project partners and their contributions. Assemblymember Greg Wallis also presented a proclamation honoring the achievement.

The gathering reflected the relationships that made the project possible. Long after the ribbon was cut, guests remained to connect with colleagues and recognize the people behind the work.

Completed in just 12 months, the County Line Road Recharge Basin and Turnout Project demonstrates how regional agencies can use existing facilities, strategic funding and shared expertise to deliver major water improvements that benefit communities across jurisdictional lines.

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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.

About San Bernardino Valley: San Bernardino Valley is a regional water agency with a service area that covers around 353 square miles in southwestern San Bernardino County and a small portion of Riverside County with a population of approximately 714,000. With a dedicated team of experts and partnerships across the region, San Bernardino Valley is committed to building a resilient and sustainable water future for the community. Learn more at www.sbvwmwd.com.