



Irvine Ranch Water District Fact Sheet

Background

Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) was established in 1961 as a California Water District. Located in Orange County, IRWD encompasses 114,560 acres or approximately 179 square miles. The District serves the city of Irvine and portions of Costa Mesa, Lake Forest, Newport Beach, Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange and unincorporated Orange County. As an independent public agency, IRWD is governed by a five-member, publicly elected board of directors. These officials are responsible for the District's policies and decision-making. Day-to-day operations are supervised by the general manager and his staff.

Core Services

Water

The District provides potable water to a population of 330,000. Approximately 35 percent of IRWD's drinking water is purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). Imported water comes from the Colorado River and from Northern California. This water is treated to drinking water standards by MWD and then distributed through IRWD's distribution system. The remaining 65 percent of the water supply comes from IRWD's extensive well system from local groundwater sources. IRWD treats this water at its disinfection facilities before it enters the distribution system of over 1200 miles of pipelines.

Sewer

IRWD maintains over 800 miles of pipelines in its sewer distribution system. This sanitary sewer system collects all wastewater coming from homes and businesses within the IRWD service area. Sewage is conveyed to two treatment plants. The Michelson Water Reclamation Plant in Irvine treats up to 18 million gallons of wastewater per day while the Los Alisos Water Reclamation Plant in Lake Forest treats up to 5.5 million gallons per day.

Recycled Water

IRWD's water reclamation plants treat wastewater to tertiary, or advanced, levels of treatment. IRWD was the first water district in the state to receive an unrestricted use permit from the state for its recycled water, which means that it can be used for any purpose except drinking. The majority of recycled water is used for landscape irrigation in parks, golf courses, school grounds, city street medians, homeowner associations and other public areas. Recycled water is also used for toilet flushing in over 25 office buildings, for cooling towers and for industrial uses such as carpet dyeing. IRWD maintains a completely separate recycled pipeline system of over 400 miles serving over 3,900 recycled water customers.

Urban Runoff Treatment

Sewers and storm drains are completely separate systems. Rain and urban runoff (wasted water from landscaping, car washing and other outdoor uses) flow into storm drains and out to the ocean. While the counties and cities have primary responsibility for storm drains, in the late 1990s IRWD began an innovative program to use reconstructed wetlands to naturally treat urban runoff before it flows to the ocean. IRWD diverts water from San Diego Creek into its wetlands for a period of 7-10 days. Plants and soils within the ponds naturally remove nitrates and other pollutants from the water before it returns, much cleaner, to the creek to continue its journey to Upper Newport Bay and the ocean.