

Unprecedented Grant Expands Groundwater Recharge

REDLANDS, CA (October 1, 2026) — A \$5.403 million grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will help the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBVWCD) expand its ability to capture stormwater and store it underground for the communities that depend on the region's groundwater. The award for the Oak Creek Basins is the largest award for the Program for Expansion of Recharge Capacity, or PERC, projects to date.

"Every storm brings an opportunity to store water for the future, but only if we have the capacity to capture it," said SBVWCD General Manager Betsy Miller Vixie. "This historic investment will help us make better use of the water nature provides, storing it underground where it can support our residents, economy and environment for years to come."

The Oak Creek Basins project is the top priority identified through SBVWCD's PERC, a regional effort with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and Western Municipal Water District to find the most effective opportunities to expand groundwater recharge.

PERC evaluated 10 potential projects across six sites. Oak Creek rose to the top because it could increase recharge while delivering strong long-term value and environmental benefits. The project will add new recharge basins upstream of existing facilities in the Plunge Creek watershed and is estimated to recharge an additional 54,242 acre-feet of water over 50 years.

Groundwater recharge is not new to SBVWCD, with roots stretching back to 1909. Since then, generations of staff and regional partners have worked to capture flows from the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek and return that water to the aquifer below. Projects like Oak Creek build on that century of experience by expanding the region's capacity to capture and store even more water when it is available.

That additional capacity matters because groundwater is a cornerstone of the San Bernardino Valley's water supply. Recharge basins allow stormwater to soak into the ground and replenish the aquifer, creating an underground reserve that can serve homes, businesses, farms and other water users long after a storm has passed.

PERC is designed to expand that opportunity across the region. The program combines new facilities, improvements to existing infrastructure, habitat protection and smarter operations to capture more stormwater when it is available.

SBVWCD's Oak Creek application was among the highest-rated submissions to the Bureau of Reclamation's Small Storage Program. Created through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the program made approximately \$43 million available nationwide this year for smaller surface water and groundwater storage projects that strengthen water supply reliability and help communities prepare for the future.

To learn more about SBVWCD and its work to expand groundwater recharge in the San Bernardino Valley, visit sbvwaterconservation.gov.

###

About San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

For more than 100 years, the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District has worked at the intersection of infrastructure, environment, and community to support local water reliability while preserving open space and biodiversity. Through science-based stewardship and collaborative partnerships, SBVWCD captures stormwater, recharges groundwater basins, and advances solutions that reflect balanced policy, sound decision-making, and responsible resource management across the San Bernardino Valley region.