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UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
“Conserving Water since 1927”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORTS
CURRENT STORM SEASON BENEFITS GROUNDWATER RECHARGE EFFORTS
BUT STILL NOT ENOUGH TO ENSURE DROUGHT RELIEF**

**Santa Felicia Dam Captures 1,000 Acre Feet of Storm Water for Storage
Vern Freeman Diversion Commits 2,045 Acre Feet to Groundwater Recharge Basins**

January 20, 2017 – Santa Paula, CA With the [National Weather Service](#) forecasting a string of increasingly intense storms to hit the area this week, United Water Conservation District (UWCD), the special district tasked with managing, protecting, conserving and enhancing the water resources of the Santa Clara River Valley and Oxnard Plain, is ramping up its groundwater recharge efforts. With weather forecasters predicting anywhere from three to six inches of rain over the next week, UWCD’s staff is eagerly awaiting the opportunity to divert storm water from the Santa Clara River and use that water to replenish the depleted groundwater supplies that have served as a buffer for the region’s demand for water during drought periods.

Since the start of the 2017 Water Year*, Ventura County has received 10.67** inches of rainfall from storm events, which is nearly double last year’s 4.80 inches for the same time period. However, last year the state was experiencing its fifth consecutive year of extreme drought. In fact, [Drought Monitor](#) reports that the worst drought region continues to be an area that extends from northwestern Los Angeles County and southernmost Kern County westward across much of Ventura County to the south coast of Santa Barbara County. This area of the state has failed to benefit from storms that have delivered more precipitation than California has seen in years.

“We’re encouraged by the intensity and consistency of storm activity so far, as it’s beneficial in replenishing the region’s groundwater storage. But we need to caution the public that, in spite of our best efforts, regulatory mandates will see most of this storm water end up in the ocean, despite the fact that we’re still a long way from drought recovery,” explained UWCD General Manager Mauricio E. Guardado, Jr.

And while UWCD’s Santa Felicia Dam and Lake Piru, which provides 82,000 acre feet of water storage capacity (enough to provide a year’s worth of water to some 164,000 households), has captured just over 1,000 acre feet (AF) of water as of January 18, the lake remains at only 11% of capacity.

Recent storms have, however, required the District to increase water releases from its Santa Felicia Dam, a stipulation of its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license. Earlier today, water releases from the Dam went from its standard 7 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 200 cfs (approximately 3,148 gallons per minute (gpm) to 89,766 gpm), with the upcoming storms likely to trigger an additional increase in the volume of releases from the Dam, all in order to facilitate steelhead migration as required by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). These



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anticipated releases will also likely *diminish* the water storage potential resulting from these storms.

The news is a bit more encouraging at UWCD's Vern Freeman Diversion, which sits next to the Santa Clara River. From December 15 through January 17, UWCD has diverted 2,045 AF of stormwater for groundwater recharge into its Saticoy and El Rio basins. This represents the largest diversion for UWCD since 2013, when 15,570 AF was diverted into the recharge basins. On average, about 60,000 AF of stormwater is diverted from the Santa Clara River each year, which represents only about 30 percent of the total river flows. UWCD is anticipating this week's storms will produce more runoff that can be diverted for groundwater recharge, however, the required bypass flows for steelhead fish migration at the Freeman may reduce the potential recharge amount.

After five years of extreme drought, Southern California's soil had been quickly absorbing much of the recent rainfall. As the soil nears saturation, more water flows into creeks and rivers that comprise the region's watersheds. As more storms pass through the area, and precipitation continues in a fairly consistent pattern, more runoff is created which increases both storage and diversion for groundwater recharge.

"One day of rain offsets the needs of local farmers to pump water for crop irrigation, but it doesn't change the water consumption habits of the tens of thousands of residents ultimately served by UWCD," explains Mr. Guardado. "To recover from five years of extreme drought, we'll need to surpass the region's average rainfall for the next five years while also looking for new and innovative means to source new water resources."

About United Water Conservation District (UWCD)

Since 1927, United Water Conservation District, situated in central Ventura County, has distinguished itself as a leader among water agencies by conserving and enhancing the water resources of the Santa Clara River and Oxnard Coastal Plain, while working to protect the environment's natural attributes. The District conserves runoff from all major tributaries of the Santa Clara River within its boundaries, including Piru, Hopper, Sespe, and Santa Paula Creeks. Without these efforts, much of this valuable water would simply flow out to sea.

Committed to managing the area's water supplies through groundwater replenishment and through the construction and operation of efficient water supply and delivery systems, today the District serves as the conservator of groundwater resources that are utilized by the cities of Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, Santa Paula, and Fillmore, as well as several mutual water districts and numerous farms and individual pumpers. It also provides surface water for agricultural irrigation and provides treated drinking water to the cities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme. For more information, visit <http://www.unitedwater.org>

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***Water Year** - The USGS uses the 12-month period, October 1 through September 30, to designate the "water year." The water year is named for the calendar year in which it ends and which includes 9 of the 12 months.

** according to the Oxnard National Weather Service