

2018 - A YEAR OF SUCCESS AND STRIDES FOR UNITED WATER AND ITS CUSTOMERS

One of UWCD's most successful years in decades!

This has been an amazing year for United Water Conservation District and its customers! Among the top accomplishments for 2018 are: United's continued commitment and advocacy efforts in our nation's capital on behalf of local project funding and sound water policies; and the submission of its Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) which will help United Water to secure the permits required for optimal water conveyance at its Freeman Diversion facility, benefitting all of Ventura County and its residents.

UNITED WATER CARRYING VENTURA COUNTY'S WATER IN WASHINGTON D.C.

While advocating for increased and enhanced water resources in Ventura County, UWCD officials travelled to Washington D.C. multiple times in 2018 to continue their collaborative efforts with federal legislators, regulators and congressional staff, addressing important water-related safety and reliability issues facing Ventura County.



UWCD Board Director Sheldon Berger, Board VP Daniel C. Naumann, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior Todd Willens, UWCD GM Mauricio E. Guardado and Board Director Bruce Dandy met to discuss Ventura County's water issues.

The delegation from United Water met with many key decision-makers and their staffs to garner support for the District's dam safety and water quality improvement projects. The United Water team also sought financial support for major capital projects including

the Freeman Diversion project, and Santa Felicia Dam Spillway and Outlet Works safety improvement projects. District officials also requested assistance in facilitating discussions with a federal agency regarding local fish passage best practices.

“We garnered a great deal of support in D.C. for water resources in Ventura County,” said Board President Robert Eranio. “Our team remains committed to working through fiscal and regulatory challenges; collaborating with our community partners to protect and enhance Ventura County’s water facilities; and to assure water safety and reliability for all of Ventura County,” he added.

UNITED WATER GARNERS VALUABLE SUPPORT FROM VENTURA COUNTY’S COALITION OF LABOR AGRICULTURE AND BUSINESS (CoLAB) IN HELPING TO PROTECT VENTURA COUNTY’S WATER SUPPLY

Back in August of 2018, the Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business (CoLAB), a coalition of committed organizations and individuals, requested an unprecedented meeting with representatives of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), hoping to encourage a firm commitment from NMFS in expediting its work that will allow United Water Conservation District to obtain a long-desired permit for its Freeman Diversion project.

Dozens of representatives from labor, business, agriculture, advocacy organizations, and chamber of commerce representatives joined with the United Water Conservation District in an effort to foster better, more efficient communication and understanding between NMFS and United Water. During the meeting with NMFS, CoLAB asked for explanations regarding the significant delays and hurdles that have been experienced by United Water while trying to obtain a permit for its Freeman Diversion facility.

“The Oxnard Plain accounts for more than half the county’s irrigated cropland and at least a billion dollars’ worth of production each year. It’s entirely dependent on groundwater, and without the recharge made possible by United Water’s Freeman Diversion, a great deal of that production would vanish because there wouldn’t be the water to support it,” commented John Krist, Executive Director of the Farm Bureau and a participant in the meeting with NMFS representatives. “That means the growers have a huge vested interest in the outcome of the negotiations over United’s Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and conditions placed by the regulatory agency on Freeman operations,” Krist continued.

“Two of the top NOAA Fisheries administrators looked us all in the eye and pledged to make resolving this situation a top priority for the agency. That means they’ve taken ownership of the process and the outcome, and I’m hopeful that after so many years of delay and obstructionism from NMFS staff in Southern California, we finally will see progress toward the approvals and permits United Water needs to carry out its mission,” continued Krist.

“Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business (CoLAB) organized a diverse group of participants representing union laborers, farmers and ranchers, and county businesses that rely on water from United’s Freeman Diversion for their livelihoods,” explains Lynn Gray Jensen, P.G., Executive Director, Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business. CoLAB participants voiced legitimate concerns about the process and received constructive feedback from NOAA Fisheries administrators Barry Thom and Lisa Van Atta describing the path forward to the mutual

goal of an approved Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. To date, numerous letters have been submitted from members of the Coalition to NOAA in support of expediting the permit process for United Water.

UNITED WATER ADVANCES MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN (MSHCP)

This fall, United Water Conservation District produced a draft Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) for its current and future operations at its Freeman Diversion facility and nearby groundwater recharge facilities. United Water submitted the draft MSHCP to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), as part of the process for securing incidental take permits (ITPs) under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).



UWCD's Board Director Sheldon Berger, Board VP Daniel C. Naumann, GM Mauricio E. Guardado, and Board Director Bruce Dandy met with NOAA's Assistant Administrator, Chris Oliver, in September.

United Water's operations and maintenance activities at the Freeman Diversion facility have the potential to affect the federally endangered southern California steelhead and protected species. United Water's goal is to implement modifications to its facilities and operations under an approved MSHCP which will ensure compliance with ESA and CESA while still ensuring sufficient water remains available to manage groundwater aquifers.

The MSHCP process provides several mechanisms for the public to be involved. United Water held multiple public information meetings and will hold additional meetings as the process advances. A federal court ruling issued after the completion of the draft plan establishes a deadline of July 31, 2020 to complete a formal application, and also requires United to conduct additional work prior to identifying a proposed project to improve existing fish passage facility. The MSHCP process is very complicated, making it a challenge to identify a date the ITPs will be issued. However, completing the

MSHCP process is a priority for United Water, with the goal of obtaining ITPs in a timeframe that allows United to begin construction on a new fish passage at the Freeman Diversion facility as soon as possible after the application is filed.

For any further information, please contact Anthony Emmert at tonye@unitedwater.org. To view the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan go to: <https://www.unitedwater.org/resource-conservation-3/habitat-conservation-plan/general-hcp-information>

UNITED RECEIVES \$300,000 GRANT FOR IRON AND MANGANESE TREATMENT

This year, United Water Conservation District was awarded a \$300,000 **WaterSmart Drought Resiliency Project** grant from the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Interior. The grant award offsets the estimated \$4.5 million cost of the United Water Conservation District's project to construct an Iron and Manganese Removal project at the District's El Rio Water Treatment Plant. The El Rio Plant serves drinking water to over 250,000 people in the El Rio, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, and Channel Islands Beach communities, as well as to Naval Base Ventura County. The District's team is currently designing the treatment system.



The District's Board of Directors and staff have been working diligently to educate the legislature and federal agencies as to the serious challenges in Ventura County regarding access to safe, clean water. Once design is completed, the grant from the Bureau of Reclamation will help achieve United's next step, which is construction of the Iron and Manganese filtration system. This system will ultimately benefit the several economically disadvantaged communities that receive their drinking water from the District's Oxnard Hueneme (OH) pipeline system. The grant will serve to offset rate increases associated with the project.

The project will also improve the operational flexibility and drought resilience of the Oxnard Hueneme pipeline system to ensure that water meeting both primary and secondary drinking water standards can be delivered to customers even during severe drought conditions.

Flashbacks from 2018



UWCD's General Manager Mauricio E. Guardado, Jr., (right) joined Casitas Municipal Water District's Interim GM Michael Flood and Calleguas Municipal Water District GM Susan Mulligan for the November AWA "Water Supply Update from the Three GMs," moderated by Stacy Roscoe, co-chair, AWA Water Issues (standing).



UWCD staff participated in the 10th Annual AWA Ventura County Water Supply Bus Tour with presentations at the District's Saticoy recharge basins and Freeman Diversion.



Mauricio Guardado presents to the Ventura County Taxpayers Association in November regarding United Water's work to bring more water to Ventura County.



UWCD Board members and staff celebrated the completion of its new Park Rangers Office at Lake Piru with a ribbon cutting ceremony in November.