

# Issues &



# Insights

Ventura County's  
supply of water news



## Spotlight on Agriculture: How UWCD Helps Ventura County's Farms Thrive

UWCD has served Ventura County's rich agricultural community for decades. Early settlers began farming the Oxnard Plain as far back as 1860. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, UWCD's predecessor, Santa Clara Water Conservation District, worked closely with local growers to deliver their water needs. UWCD took up that mantle in 1950 and has been innovating water management for regional farmers ever since.

Local growers rely on groundwater to sustain strawberries, avocados, lemons, and more. The farmers access water for irrigation through wells drilled into the aquifers. Years of increased pumping caused water levels in the aquifer to drop below sea level, resulting in saltwater intrusion into those invaluable aquifers. UWCD mitigates this seawater intrusion and supports a reliable groundwater supply through a series of key projects, including:

### Santa Felicia Dam at Lake Piru



Conservation releases at the Santa Felicia Dam at Lake Piru are vital to the District's

groundwater recharge efforts. Runoff from the Piru Creek Watershed is stored in Lake Piru in winter and spring when downstream groundwater basins are at their fullest. UWCD releases the stored water each year when the downstream groundwater basins are at their seasonal lows. The water is released into Lower Piru Creek and continues to flow to the Santa Clara River, where it is joined by runoff from the Sespe and Santa Paula Creek watersheds. This process maximizes the amount of water that reaches the Freeman Diversion, which replenishes groundwater that makes its way to Ventura County's farms.

## Freeman Diversion



The Freeman Diversion is critical to Ventura County's agricultural economy. The 25-foot-high grade control structure spans 1,200 feet across the Santa Clara River and diverts an average of 60,000 acre-feet annually for groundwater recharge. In 2023, that number was a record 148,000 acre-feet or 48 billion gallons of water. This water is essential to local farms as it replenishes the aquifers beneath the Oxnard Plain and slows seawater intrusion beneath 50,000 acres of productive prime agricultural lands.

### The Freeman Diversion:

- Supports more than **377,000 people** who depend on the aquifers that UWCD recharges through the facility
- Sustains **\$1.08 billion** in annual crop production in Ventura County
- Supports **16,800 jobs** and **\$994 million** in direct and indirect agriculture income
- Provides water for an agriculture industry that contributes about **\$3.5 billion** to Ventura County's economy and employs nearly **43,000 people**



## Pumping Trough Pipeline



The Pumping Trough Pipeline (PTP) was constructed in 1986 to deliver surface water diverted from the Santa Clara River and groundwater pumped from deep wells to growers across the Oxnard Plain and Pleasant Valley. As an agricultural irrigation pipeline, the project reduces pumping in the over-drafted upper aquifer system.

Now, UWCD is working to deliver recycled water through the PTP. All PTP customers will receive the benefit of recycled water once it enters the system. Recycled water is ideal for agriculture irrigation as it reduces water importation costs, minimizes freshwater demands, and creates a sustainable water supply.

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