Water shutdown highlights Western Municipal Water District’s resilience, reliability

Riverside, CA - When Western Municipal Water District’s (Western) largest water supplier shut the spigot for seven days to handle vital maintenance, what ripple effects did customers feel? Virtually none.

Western assured reliable, uninterrupted water delivery to 23,000 customers despite the weeklong halt of water deliveries from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) to Western.

In one of the longest such shutdowns on record, MWD on Jan. 23 idled the Henry J. Mills Treatment Plant, which treats Northern California water specifically for Western and Eastern municipal water districts.

The Riverside plant provides approximately 60 percent of the drinkable water that Western provides to its retail customers.

To keep the taps flowing, a group of Western staff spent two months planning for the supply interruption. They coordinated with other local water agencies to maximize storage and alternative water supplies during the shutdown. Meanwhile, Western’s customers helped ensure conservation during the supply stoppage by suspending outdoor irrigation and monitoring indoor use.

Western also leveraged the downtime to address maintenance needs. By replacing meters, repairing valves and installing electrical upgrades while the system was offline, the District cut costs, saved time and avoided disruptions going forward.

More broadly, Western in recent years has taken many steps to ease the District’s long-term reliance on imported water to fortify reliability, hedge against drought and control costs for customers.

Such efforts include the construction of a new basin to capture stormwater runoff; an agreement to buy surplus water from Riverside Public Utilities; increased use of recycled water for outdoor landscaping; expansion of local desalters to purify brackish groundwater; and the development of the La Sierra pipeline that connects the expanded desalters to water customers.

Thanks to these and other efforts, the Mills plant shutdown produced no issues, injuries or customer complaints. Rather, the region’s cleanest water continued flowing – reliably as ever – throughout Western’s 527-square-mile service area.


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*Western Municipal Water District provides water supply, wastewater disposal and water resource management to the public in a safe, reliable, environmentally sensitive and financially responsible manner.*