Treatment Plant Expansion Provides Greater Regional Efficiencies and Increases the Beneficial Use of Recycled Water

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – A significant and historical milestone was reached recently that expands the capability and efficiency of the West Riverside Wastewater Treatment Plant – the city of Corona joined as a participating agency and will provide flows into the facility. The plant’s expansion will include an upgrade to tertiary-treated recycled water as a reusable product.

The Western Riverside County Regional Wastewater Authority (WRCRWA) Board voted unanimously in March to admit the city of Corona as a member and approved a cost-sharing agreement that allows for a major plant expansion to proceed. Modifications to the Joint Power Agreement allows for the voting rules to change from a simple majority to super majority.

“Productive relationships with partnering agencies provide value to all of our customers,” explained Western Board President Don Galleano. Regional collaboration, a major part of Western’s efficient business practices, allows for the continued increase in local water reliability.

WRCRWA is a joint powers authority consisting of the city of Norco, Jurupa Community Services District, Home Gardens Sanitary District, Western and newest member, the city of Corona. Each agency’s Board of Directors approved the agreement throughout May, June and July. The Santa Ana Water Project Authority (SAWPA), which was an original member agency that contributed greatly to WRCRWA’s success over the years, withdrew from the block as it is not a contributor of wastewater to the plant. “SAWPA is grateful to have helped build a solid organization and believes it’s time to shift those energies to other projects of similar and significant regional benefit,” said Celeste Cantu, SAWPA general manager.

The proposed $44 million expansion from 8 million gallons a day (MGD) to 13.25 MGD of treatment capacity will include other benefits, such as lower energy costs, reduced biosolids disposal costs, more recycled water for beneficial use within the member agencies services areas, and lower future expenses for equipment refurbishment and replacement. Finally, the addition of Corona as a member agency provides the WRCRWA plant with redundant staffing capabilities in emergency situations. Construction costs for the expansion are expected to be below average by utilizing original member contributions of excess unused capacity in numerous components within the existing plant.

The WRCRWA Board awarded a $2.3 million expansion design contract to the A.A. Webb/AQUA Engineering team that conducted the preliminary design report. WRCRWA and the design team are working closely with Southern California Edison to ensure that the most efficient pumps and motors are installed during the expansion. This collaboration will result in a more energy-efficient wastewater treatment plant, which will help keep monthly rates as low as possible for customers.

“The addition of Corona is monumental as it provides a needed service to that particular community and it also offers the ability to expand the plant to its full capabilities,” said Robert Seymour, who served as the WRCRWA chair at time of the expansion, of Home Gardens Sanitary District. The 14-year old plant treats incoming wastewater that is generated by homes and businesses within its member agencies. After treatment at three levels, the “tertiary” treated water will soon be a recycled water resource for use to irrigate parks, golf courses and school fields. Corona, Norco and JCSD have expressed interest in use of recycled water from WRCRWA for both recharge and direct nonpotable use. WRCRWA is in the process of preparing the environmental impact report to support the future beneficial use of recycled water.