

Pasadena Star News

State grants will boost Valley water projects

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CARSON - Fourteen water projects across Los Angeles County were awarded \$25 million in grants from the state's Department of Water Resources on Wednesday.

Nearly half of the funding will go toward five San Gabriel Valley water projects, which will expand the use of recycled water and increase water storage and flows.

"These projects are very specific to our area, and will have an immediate affect on habit restoration, water quality and conservation and public education," said Assemblyman Mike Eng, D-El Monte. "I am thrilled to see the money from Proposition 50 beginning to be awarded."

The grant money used comes from Proposition 50, which was passed by voters in November 2002 and authorizes \$3.4 billion for a variety of water and wetlands projects.

Morris Dam, located in the San Gabriel Mountains above Azusa, a water recycling plant in El Monte and a reed removal project at Whittier Narrows are among the San Gabriel Valley projects that are receiving nearly \$11.5 million.

On Wednesday, Lester Snow, director of the State Department of Water Resources, presented the check to Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke on behalf of the county's flood control district, which oversees the Greater Los Angeles County Regional Water Management Plan.

"This represents the epitome of integrated water management," Snow said. "Instead of everyone working separately to meet their needs, they are working together."

The projects are part of the Great Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, which relies on a variety of agencies to develop solutions for regional water issues.

The funding comes at a time when local water agencies and cities are pushing for conservation and going as far as even placing a moratorium on water hook-ups, such as Lincoln Avenue Water Co. in Altadena.

Of the \$25 million, nearly \$11.5 million will go to five projects spanning the San Gabriel Valley.

The Morris Dam Water Supply Enhancement Project, which totals \$16.4 million, will receive \$5.1 million from the state.

Carol Williams, director of the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster, which oversees water rights, said that the project will increase the reservoir storage capacity.

"This not only helps with flood-control protection, but contributing to our water supply," Williams said.

The Whittier Narrows Water Reclamation plant in El Monte will be given \$2 million, which will go toward the \$12.6 total cost to expand the use of recycled water for groundwater recharge.

The project will use an ultraviolet disinfection as a way to treat the water.

Central Basin's water reliability project, which is expected to cost \$98.5 million, was awarded \$2 million.



Workers construct space to install UV light treatment equipment that will purify reclaimed water at the Whittier Narrows Water Reclamation Plant July 23, 2008. (Staff photo by Leo Jarzomb)

This project will provide recycled water for irrigation purposes, and involves the installation of an 11-mile pipeline that will extend from Pico Rivera through Montebello, and will connect in Vernon.

The project is expected to conserve more than 6.5 billion gallons of water each year.

"This will increase water conservation throughout the district, and it is coming at a time with all of the water shortages," said Central Basin General Manager Art Aguilar.

Central Basin's project to implement a large landscape water management program was awarded nearly \$900,000. The total cost of the project is expected to cost \$2.4 million.

An invasive weed control project, which was awarded \$178,000, more than half of the total project, will restore natural habitat along the San Gabriel River, and it will remove 30 acres of giant reeds along the San Gabriel River channel and other areas at Whittier Narrows.

In all, the 14 projects, which span from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, total \$174 million, said Dean Efstathiou, acting director of the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works.

"This funding is just scratching the surface of our overall needs," Efstathiou said.