

SYPHON RESERVOIR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Questions & Answers



Q: WHAT IS RECYCLED WATER?

A: Recycled water is water that has been safely treated for reuse after it goes down the drain. It comes from toilets, washing machines, sinks, showers, bathtubs and dishwashers. Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) produces 28 million gallons of it each day, all throughout the year.

Q: HOW DOES IRWD USE RECYCLED WATER THROUGHOUT THE SERVICE AREA?

A: IRWD has been recycling water for more than fifty years. Recycled water is used primarily for landscaping – nearly 80 percent of IRWD’s recycled water supply is used to irrigate shared community spaces like public parks, street medians, school fields and other city property. It also has industrial uses such as mixing concrete and office building uses such as flushing toilets and cooling towers. Recycled water is also used to fight wildfires throughout the region.

Q: WHY DOES IRWD NEED MORE RECYCLED WATER?

A: Recycled water helps us prepare responsibly for the future. Demand for drinking water is growing, droughts are more common and recurring, and wildfires are becoming bigger and more frequent. Every gallon we use saves a gallon of drinking water.

Q: WHAT IS SYPHON RESERVOIR?

A: Syphon Reservoir is a part of IRWD’s recycled water storage system – it is one of four open-air reservoirs that stores recycled water that serves Irvine and the surrounding communities.

Q: WHAT IS THE SYPHON RESERVOIR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT?

A: The Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project is an investment to increase the capacity of the existing recycled water storage reservoir from 578 acre-feet (188 million gallons) to 5,000 acre-feet (1.6 billion gallons). This project is crucial to maintaining our diverse water supply and improving water reliability.

Q: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT?

A: Recycled water is a key source for meeting local water supply needs and preparing us for the future. Expanding Syphon Reservoir will help IRWD to reduce its dependence on costly imported water by allowing us to swap out an expensive source of water for one that is less expensive and more reliable. The project also will enable the District to store nearly 100 percent of the recycled water it produces, ensuring we use the right water for the right purpose.

Q: WHO BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT?

A: The project will benefit all IRWD customers and the Southern California region. By increasing its recycled water storage capacity, IRWD is able to become more self-sufficient and reduce its reliance on imported water supplies that other water agencies in the region can use to support the needs of their customers.

Q: WHAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE PROPOSED FOR THE SYPHON RESERVOIR DAM?

A: Syphon Reservoir’s engineered dam will be modernized and upgraded so it continues to meet the latest design and safety requirements. The design will be peer-reviewed through a rigorous process overseen by a technical advisory panel of respected reservoir experts. Engineered dams are the most common dams found throughout California. They blend with the natural environment, following the contours of land, and utilize compacted earth and rock materials from the immediate site – reducing the need to haul materials on site for construction.

Q: WHAT IS IRWD’S TRACK RECORD IN RESERVOIR CONSTRUCTION AND SAFETY, AND HOW DOES IT ENSURE SAFETY?

A: IRWD is an experienced reservoir operator with a strong track record in reservoir construction, maintenance, performance, safety and facilities construction. IRWD operates five reservoirs, including Syphon Reservoir, all of which are state-inspected and meet all requirements for safe use. IRWD goes above and beyond the required safety standards by retaining dam safety experts to inspect its dams annually, monitoring its dams daily, and inspecting them monthly to measure and analyze drain flows, monitoring wells, groundwater and other fluid pressures.



Irvine Ranch
WATER DISTRICT

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Q: HOW WILL THE PROJECT BE FUNDED?

A: This project is made possible by Irvine property owners' commitment to building a reliable and sustainable infrastructure system. It will be funded through an existing capital investment assessment that property owners already pay via their property tax bills.

Q: WILL THE PROJECT HAVE ANY IMPACT ON WATER RATES?

A: Drinking water rates for the average customer will not increase due to the project. In fact, the project is anticipated to generate approximately \$85 million in savings for customers over the next 50 years, preserving low customer rates.

Q: HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO BUILD THE PROJECT?

A: Construction is expected to take approximately two to three years.

Q: HOW WILL IRWD MANAGE CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC AND POTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION NOISE?

A: An important part of the environmental review process is to identify how construction of the project may impact issues like traffic, noise and dust, and what IRWD can and will do to reduce or eliminate those impacts on the community. IRWD will ensure construction trucks are not accessing or leaving the site during peak traffic hours – including immediately before or after school. It will limit construction to the typical five-day work week to minimize noise and implement dust control procedures consistent with other large construction projects. IRWD will ensure any and all identified mitigation requirements are met throughout the construction period.

Q: HOW CAN RESIDENTS PROVIDE INPUT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR)?

A: IRWD has a longstanding and ongoing commitment to open governance and transparency. It welcomes neighbors and community members to share their questions and comments about the project. As part of the process for developing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), IRWD will conduct a public meeting and invite the community to provide input on what to study as part of the EIR. This meeting has not yet been scheduled, but will be published as soon as they have been determined.

Q: WHAT IS IRWD DOING TO ENSURE OUTREACH EFFORTS ARE INCLUSIVE OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES?

A: IRWD is committed to keeping the community informed in culturally sensitive ways, and provides information and advertising in the many languages spoken by our customers. In addition to engaging in community outreach, IRWD offers presentations to many organizations that represent and reach diverse communities throughout its service area.

Q: HOW WILL IRWD KEEP THE COMMUNITY INFORMED DURING THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS AND CONSTRUCTION?

A: IRWD will keep the community informed about the project, public meetings and comment periods through a variety of communications including advertising, direct mail, open houses, website, e-newsletters, social media and a speakers' bureau. If you are interested in having a project representative make a presentation to a group you're involved with, or would like to be included on our contact list, please email info@irwd.com.

For more information, go online to syphonreservoirproject.com, or contact our Public Affairs department at 949-453-5500 or info@irwd.com.

Irvine Ranch Water District is a local public agency that provides water and sewer services to residents and businesses in Irvine and the surrounding communities. It is led by a publicly elected Board of Directors who live in the community.

