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IEUA and Regional Water Agencies Pioneer Innovative Program *Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program*

INLAND EMPIRE, CA – The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), in partnership with five regional water agencies and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), have come together to establish the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program (SARCCUP), an innovative, regional groundwater banking program which will improve the region’s supply during future seasons of drought and highlight water-use efficiency throughout the San Bernardino, Orange and Riverside counties.

“This groundbreaking agreement provides an unrivaled solution to ongoing water supply challenges,” stated IEUA Board President and Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) Chair Jasmin A. Hall. “Through proactive planning and collaboration, the region is well-positioned to contend with future droughts and add to our diverse water supply portfolio, while adding increased resiliency to the region’s water supply.”

The SARCCUP is a joint effort between the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC), Orange County Water District (OCWD), San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley), Western Municipal Water District (WMWD), and MWD. The \$150 million program will provide a collaborative, watershed-scale approach toward groundwater basin management, replenishment and water transfers.

With assistance from SAWPA, more than \$55 million in grants from California Proposition 84 were distributed to fund the program. Approximately \$500,000 from Proposition 84 funds will be used to support up to 10 retail water agencies in the watershed to create efficiency-based water budgets for a sub-set of their customers, such as those classified as commercial or industrial.

“This funding will also provide an education program and landscape design assistance to aid residents in maintaining a water efficient landscape, which is essential, especially during times of drought,” said Hall.

Under the agreement, SARCCUP will use up to 137,000 acre-feet of storage in six groundwater basins. During wet years, SBVMWD may have additional water available through its contract with the State Water Project. MWD has entered into an agreement with SBVMWD that allows for SBVMWD to sell surplus State Water Project water to MWD, and as part of SARCCUP, MWD will make a portion of the water purchased from SBVMWD available to SARCCUP partner agencies for use within the Santa Ana watershed.

Water that is banked would then be extracted using groundwater wells, treated and then used for drinking water during periods of drought. The regional water agencies will be able to bank groundwater in any of six groundwater basins, with deliveries made through interconnecting pipelines or via in lieu delivery.

The program also provides funding for habitat restoration and water-use efficiency programs. Removal of 640 acres of *Arundo donax* – a non-native plant that uses 3.75 additional acre-feet of water per year compared to native habitat plants – will be completed within five years. This will create annual water savings of approximately 2,400 acre-feet of water.

“It is truly wonderful to see the collaboration between the member agencies involved, and IEUA is proud to be on the forefront of creating a resilient water supply for the region,” continued Hall.

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The Inland Empire Utilities Agency covers 242-square miles, distributes imported water, provides industrial/municipal wastewater collection and treatment services, and other related utility services to more than 875,000 people through its member agencies which include Chino, Chino Hills, Cucamonga Valley Water District, Fontana, Fontana Water Company, Montclair, Monte Vista Water District, Ontario, and Upland.