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Orange County Sanitation District Awarded the Grand Prize for Environmental Communications

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (April 20, 2018) – The Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD), along with the Orange County Water District (OCWD), received the Grand Prize for Environmental Communications for the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) Bottled Water Campaign. The campaign aimed to educate and increase awareness of water reuse projects and break the stigma associated with these projects that are often referred to as “toilet-to-tap.” OCSD and OCWD received this award from the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists (AAEES) at the 2018 Excellence in Environmental Engineering and Science Awards Luncheon and Conference held in Washington DC.

The GWRS is a collaboration project between OCSD and OCWD that has been online since 2008 and provides 100 million gallons of water a day to north and central Orange County. It takes highly treated wastewater that would otherwise be discharged to the Pacific Ocean and purifies it using a three-step process consisting of microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. It is the world’s largest advanced water purification project for potable reuse and has been hailed as the global model.

The GWRS Bottled Water campaign began in March 2017 with pre-kick-off industry and legislative events that lead to a rousing Winter Fest celebration of the GWRS 10th anniversary. During the Winter Fest event, the GWRS set a Guinness World Records title for the most wastewater recycled to drinking water in 24 hours. Throughout the campaign traditional and social media were engaged, invited to attend events, interview staff/board, and share their opinions about the water and the future of these projects.

“In 2017, OCWD and OCSD began the campaign to educate general and targeted publics about the safety, quality and taste of reused water in efforts to help similar reuse projects gain community support and ultimately help California be water-secure during droughts. As global leaders we feel it’s our job to foster support for these types of projects and we truly take pride in operating our own facility for more than 10 years,” said OCWD President Denis Bildeau.

“We were proud to be a part of this educational outreach effort where staff and board members went out to established events to reach California masses such as the general public, students, water industry personnel, business and civic leaders, and legislators,” said OCSD Board Chairman Greg Sebourn. “OCSD and OCWD were the first in the Western Hemisphere to bottle advanced purified water for educational purposes and we were happy to share it with the community to demonstrate that the water is safe and reliable. We are committed to recycling every drop possible and Californians are seeing that recycling is the future of water.”

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About Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD)

OCSD is a public agency that provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.6 million people in central and northwest Orange County. OCSD is a special district that is governed by a 25-member Board of Directors comprised of 20 cities, four special districts, and one representative from the Orange County Board of Supervisors. OCSD has two operating facilities that treat wastewater from residential, commercial and industrial sources.

For more information about the Orange County Sanitation District, please visit www.ocsd.com.

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