

Testimony of William M. Huber
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Before the Subcommittee on Water & Power
Committee on Resources
United State House of Representatives

H.R. 5786
The South Orange County Recycled Water Enhancement Act

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Good Afternoon Chairman Radanovich and distinguished members of this Subcommittee. My name is William Huber and I am the Assistant City Manager of the City of San Juan Capistrano, California. On behalf of the City and our partners on this project, it is my privilege to present this testimony to you today in support of H.R. 5786 and to discuss the benefits this legislation will provide to the region. I would like to thank Representatives Ken Calvert, John Campbell, and Gary Miller for introducing this bill and for their leadership in working to resolve California's water supply issues.

The City of San Juan Capistrano relies on both imported and local sources of water. Most of the imported water comes through the Metropolitan Water District from the Bay Delta and Colorado River. San Juan Capistrano recognizes the increasing demand on these limited resources and is working to balance the needs of our residents with limited water resources. We are responding to those challenges by investing heavily in the development of local water resources. The City has already invested \$32 million in its Ground Water Recovery Project (GWRP). This facility was completed in December 2004 and has produced 4,800 acre-ft. of potable water in fiscal year 2005-2006 from the local brackish groundwater basin. This represents approximately 45 percent of the City's current potable water demands. The GWRP also provides an important source of water during emergencies. This was tested in the past two winter seasons during scheduled shut downs of the import supply system.

The City of San Juan Capistrano currently provides water supply, and wastewater collection to over 36,000 people in one of the regions fastest growing areas. Combined with our partner agencies, we provided services to 242,000 people over 60 square miles.

In 1989, the City of San Juan Capistrano installed a separate non-potable water system to utilize lower quality groundwater supply for landscape irrigation of golf courses, parks, recreation areas, greenbelts, schoolyards, highway medians, and industrial uses. The non-potable water system source is from non-potable water wells in the San Juan Basin and currently supplies approximately 300 to 400 acre-feet per year. The non-potable system also includes a reservoir and approximately 42,000 linear feet of distribution pipe. This system is clearly not sufficient to meet future demands without construction of significant improvements, and the securing of additional water resources.

The City's recent Recycled Water Master Plan has determined that there was an existing demand of 610 acre-feet per year of non-potable water from existing users; an existing 1,430 acre-feet per year of demand from domestic water customers that could be converted to non-potable water; and 1,228 acre-feet per year of future demand, for a total non-potable water demand of 3,268 acre-feet per year.

H.R. 5786 will amend The Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study Facilities Act to authorize the design, planning and construction of an advanced water treatment plant facility and recycled water system. The project anticipates the construction of a 9 MGD Advanced Water Treatment (AWT) Facility at J.B. Latham Regional Wastewater Plant. Construction of a new tertiary treatment facility at the J.B. Latham Facility would allow for production of high quality, tertiary treated reclaimed water.

The Project would construct a recycled water plant and recycled water system consisting of four reservoirs, one pump station, and 29 pipeline projects totaling 102,000 lineal feet. These improvements will provide for 4,408 acre-feet per year of non-potable water distributed to areas in San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point, Laguna Niguel and Mission Viejo not currently served by a reclaimed water source.

The South Orange County Wastewater Agency (SOCWA) operates and maintains the J.B. Latham Plant, located in the City of Dana Point. This secondary treatment facility is jointly owned by the Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD), City of San Juan Capistrano (CSJC), South Coast Water District (SCWD) and Moulton Niguel Water District (MNWD). These agencies are members of SOCWA Project Committee No. 2 Advanced Water Treatment (PC-2-AWT), which was formed to better

manage wastewater treatment, and develop recycled water in the San Juan Basin.

SOCWA will be the lead agency for the development of the AWT, the City of San Juan Capistrano will be the lead agency for the development of the distribution trunkline system, and each participating agency will develop and operate their own distribution system. This is a regional cooperative effort by the South Orange County Wastewater Agency (SOCWA), South Coast Water District, Moulton Niguel Water District, and the City of San Juan Capistrano. Currently, the City and areas within its partner's service areas lack a source of recycled water. Development of a recycled water source is paramount to our goals of reduced demand on water imported from Northern California (CALFED) and the Colorado River. An additional benefit of the facility is reduction in the quantity of the wastewater effluent currently discharged into the ocean.

The proposed new recycled water supply would come from sewer effluent treated at the proposed AWT at the J.B. Latham facility. This is water which currently is discharged into the ocean as secondary treated effluent. There are no other local water source options. The proposed project would also supply an additional 1,140 acre-feet per year to areas within the South Coast Water District and Moulton Niguel Water District.

The total 4,408 acre feet per year would otherwise have to be addressed by increasing the imported water supply. This would represent a step back from the reductions realized by the GWRP and is not an acceptable solution considering the state of water resources in Southern California.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the Prosperity of our region and the quality of life we enjoy depends a great deal on water supply. Increasing populations and diminishing resources have focused attention on developing alternative water supplies from local sources. In recent years, public awareness and public acceptance has greatly enhanced the use of recycled water. Water recycling has become more commonplace as pressure on potable water supplies continue to grow.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to testify on behalf of H.R. 5786. This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any further questions you may have.