

Cardiff Wastewater Facility Awarded “Plant of the Year”

The wastewater recycling facility in Cardiff near the San Elijo Lagoon has been awarded "Plant of the Year" in the category of mid-sized treatment facility by the California Water Environment Association. The not-for-profit association comprises about 8,000 professionals in the wastewater industry. Annually the association chooses a plant for the award that has shown operational excellence and outstanding permit compliance. Other criterion for the award included cost effectiveness, innovative training and practices, and industry leadership.

The San Elijo Joint Powers Authority (SEJPA), which owns and operates the water reclamation facility, is recognized nationally and statewide for its excellence and innovation in water recycling.

The SEJPA recycles more than 450 million gallons of wastewater a year from Encinitas, Solana Beach, and Rancho Santa Fe. This is about 50 percent of the total water that flows through the SEJPA plant. Recycled water, sometimes called “purple pipe” for the color of the pipes that transport the recycled water, is used to irrigate the Del Mar Fairgrounds, Lomas Santa Fe County Golf Course, Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, Ecker YMCA, and Scripps Hospital in Encinitas, as well as local parks and schools. All of the water used by Caltrans on landscaping around highways in the cities of Encinitas and Solana Beach is recycled water. The reclaimed water, which is not drinkable, is lower in price than potable or drinking water. It is also drought proof, which is critically important as the state enters its fourth year of drought.

The SEJPA, in partnership with the Olivenhain Municipal Water District, recently broke ground on expanding recycled water to the Village Park area of Encinitas. This project will save millions of gallons of potable water and help the local water district meet the state mandated 25-35 percent reduction in potable water use.

David Zito, Deputy Mayor of Solana Beach and Chair of the SEJPA stated, “We take great pride in operating this award winning facility which is helping north coastal San Diego County have a more sustainable water supply.”

In 2013, the SEJPA added new microfiltration and reverse osmosis treatment, also known as membrane technology, to its reclamation facility to remove unwanted salts and other contaminants from the treated water. The American Membrane Technology Association awarded the SEJPA its Membrane Facility of the Year in April 2015 at its national conference in Florida for the innovation.

Catherine Blakespear, Deputy Mayor of Encinitas and the Vice Chair of the SEJPA noted, “These awards recognize the great work taking place locally by our dedicated water professionals to help us avoid unnecessary water use and productively reuse the water that we all need for our daily lives.”

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