

## WHAT IS RECYCLED WATER?

Recycled water is wastewater that has been highly treated and disinfected so that it meets the California Department of Health guidelines for irrigation of crops that are consumed without cooking. The final product is clear, odorless, and safe. Golf courses, farmland, school yards, and recreational areas have been using recycled water for irrigation for many years.

## WHY USE RECYCLED WATER?

Groundwater wells in the northern portion of the Salinas Valley have become contaminated with seawater because pumping has exceeded recharge. Because of this, many of these wells have been shut down. Fortunately, recycled water is available and fully safe for crop irrigation. Other reasons to use recycled water include the:

- preservation of agricultural land, and
- protection of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.

## WHAT ARE THE MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RECYCLING PROJECTS?

The Monterey County Water Recycling Projects are a partnership between the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) and the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA). Their purpose is to provide recycled water for agricultural irrigation. The regional recycling facility will start operation in late 1997 and will provide up to 19,500 acre-feet of water annually. The water that will be treated originates from urban areas including



Monterey, Salinas, Castroville, Moss Landing, Seaside, Pacific Grove, Marina, Sand City, Fort Ord, Del Rey Oaks, and some unincorporated areas of Monterey County, California.

## WHO WILL USE THE WATER?

The recycled water will be piped to the North Salinas Valley to supply nearly 12,000 acres of farmland. The crops irrigated include a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits.

## HOW SAFE IS RECYCLED WATER?

A significant amount of research has been completed to evaluate the quality of recycled water and its impact on crop production. The Monterey Wastewater Reclamation Study for Agriculture (MWRSA), which was completed in 1987, was an extensive 11-year study that determined that produce grown in fields irrigated with recycled water was absolutely safe. In addition, the appearance

and yields of the crops tested were as good or better than those grown with well water.

In short, the MWRSA study proved that irrigation using recycled water makes sense. This study has been internationally acclaimed as definitive research assuring the safety of recycled water for irrigation of crops that are consumed without cooking.

## HOW WERE THE PROJECTS FUNDED?

The \$75 million projects were funded by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and State of California low-interest loans, plus local funding. Construction costs will be paid back using water delivery charges and assessments. Short-term financing was used to construct the projects prior to receipt of loan funds.

## WHO HAS ENDORSED THE PROJECTS?

After reviewing the results of the MWRSA study, the projects were approved by both the California Department of Health Services and the Monterey County Health Department.

Other proponents of the Monterey County Water Recycling Projects include:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation*
- California State Water Resources Control Board*
- Monterey County Board of Supervisors*
- Monterey County Agricultural and Historic Land Conservancy, Inc.*
- Sierra Club, Ventana Chapter*
- Monterey Bay Aquarium*
- Elkhorn Slough Foundation*
- Friends of the Sea Otter*

## WHO ELSE SUPPORTS WATER RECYCLING?

In June 1994, seven federal and state agencies responsible for environmental and public health protection and water supply signed a Statement of Support for Water Recycling in California.

And, in 1996, the National Research Council issued a report that indicated that recycled water was safe for food crop production.

## HOW IS THE QUALITY OF RECYCLED WATER ASSURED?

Recycled water produced at MRWPCA's Regional Treatment Plant as well as the water in the distribution system will be monitored on a daily basis according to criteria set by the California Department of Health.

Because of the importance and size of these projects, a special enhanced quality assurance program has been developed that is more extensive than state and local requirements.

## WHO ELSE USES RECYCLED WATER FOR IRRIGATING FOOD CROPS?

The Irvine Ranch Water District has been using recycled water for food crops for over 20 years. There are many other growers throughout California using recycled water on crops such as corn, tomatoes, celery, carrots, citrus, and grapes.

## WHAT IS THE WATER QUALITY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE?

The mission of the Water Quality and Operations Committee is to coordinate efforts between the agricultural water users and those operating the treatment plant and distribution system. Their overall goal is to assure safety, efficiency and quality of operations.

The committee is comprised of representatives from the Monterey County Department of Health Services, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, property owners and growers.

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# MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RECYCLING PROJECTS



*An innovative source of  
water for agriculture.*