



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Gina DePinto, OCWD (714) 378-3228,
gdepinto@ocwd.com

ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT RESPONDS TO DRINKING WATER REPORT *District's Stringent Water Quality Tests Reveal OCWD Water is High-Quality and Safe*

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (March 18, 2008) — In response to a recent article by the *Associated Press*, OCWD announced that drinking water drawn from the Orange County groundwater basin is high-quality, safe and meets all state and federal drinking water standards.

The *Associated Press* released a story on trace amounts of pharmaceuticals found in drinking water supplies across the nation. For more than 70 years, OCWD has proactively monitored and tested its groundwater. Recently, the District began testing a limited number of monitoring wells in areas near its recharge and seawater barrier operations that would most likely contain pharmaceuticals. The results in these areas revealed extremely low, trace levels (parts per trillion) of pharmaceuticals. These levels are more than 100 times lower than the most conservative safe levels determined from studies conducted around the world. The levels are one million times lower than a therapeutic dose. OCWD does not believe there is any health risk to citizens.

“Only recently has new technology allowed for sensitive analytical measures to detect the presence of pharmaceuticals in water at these extremely low trace levels,” said Mike Wehner, assistant general manager of Water Quality and Research. “OCWD is actively applying these new measures and has invested in state-of-the-art equipment to observe the presence of pharmaceuticals at part per trillion levels. Looking at the most susceptible locations in the basin we have found only minute traces of pharmaceuticals. To provide perspective, a person would have to drink over a million liters of water to receive one daily safe dose of the most frequently detected pharmaceutical,” he said.

Pharmaceuticals have been in water supplies for years. For example, upstream cities often treat wastewater and discharge it into rivers that are used by other cities downstream. The downstream cities then treat the same water and it is used again for water supply. The primary sources of water for the groundwater basin come from captured Santa Ana River flows, imported water from the State Water Project and Colorado River and also from the District's Groundwater Replenishment System. The sources of pharmaceuticals in the Santa Ana River are primarily tertiary treated wastewater discharged from wastewater plants in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Treated wastewater discharged into the streams that provide water for the State Water Project and the

OCWD WATER QUALITY TESTING
ADD 1-1-1

Colorado River also affects those sources. OCWD water purified by the Groundwater Replenishment System contains no detectable pharmaceuticals.

OCWD is currently participating in a new study of pharmaceuticals in water with other water agencies, including Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) and the National Water Research Institute (NWRI). Additionally, OCWD has collaborated with scientists at SNWA over the past several years in conjunction with ongoing American Water Works Association Research Foundation studies.

OCWD is committed to enhancing Orange County's groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities utilize the groundwater basin managed by OCWD: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster and Yorba Linda.

-30-