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State Water Board Releases Draft Report on Feasibility of Developing Regulations for Direct Potable Reuse (DPR)

Draft report furthers efforts toward new water source for California communities facing long-term water reliability challenges

Sacramento, CA.

Today the State of California's Division of Drinking Water (DDW) released a draft report on the feasibility of developing statewide regulations for direct potable reuse of recycled water. The draft report is available for review and input during a 45-day public comment period. It is anticipated that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), in consultation with an existing Expert Panel* will submit a final report to the state legislature by December, 2016.

After reviewing the Expert Panel's recommendations, the SWRCB agrees with the panel that the creation of criteria for the direct potable reuse of recycled water is achievable. At the same time, the State Water Board noted that additional research would be most beneficial, and several knowledge gaps must be addressed before DPR regulations can be adopted.

WaterReuse California (WRCA) is confident that the final report will help move California toward the use of this drought-proof water supply. Ultimately, a set of new, rigorous guidelines and regulations addressing the multiple treatment methods and technologies used to provide advanced purified water will give water-challenged California communities new options for the future.

WaterReuse California, Managing Director Jennifer West stated, "*WRCA supports DDW in soliciting feedback on the draft report during the public comment period. It's critically important to hear from all who are interested in the future of California's water supply, and to make certain all voices are heard and concerns are addressed.*"

Grant Davis, President of the WRCA Board and General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency said, *“We congratulate the Water Board for getting this out in a timely manner and we look forward to hearing comments. This helps utilities around the state to address the serious water supply challenges California faces, especially during drought conditions.”*

West Basin Municipal Water District General Manager Rich Nagel noted, *“Purified water enhances water supply reliability and helps protect us from future water shortages by diversifying supply sources. It is not prudent to rely too much on any one source of water. Utilizing well-studied and regulated potable reuse provides water planners with a locally controlled, sustainable source of drinking water; one that is not subject to drought or a drying climate, and which reduces discharges to the ocean and improves protection of inland waters.”*

The draft report, including information on public input, is available at: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>. Once comments are received and the draft report is revised, it is anticipated that a final report will be submitted to the state legislature by December 31, 2016.

****Background***

Direct Potable Reuse (DPR) would provide the ability to recycle more water and provide additional operational flexibility. In addition, DPR would allow for utilities without groundwater basins or reservoirs to pursue potable reuse. Starting six years ago, legislation was passed that required the State Water Resources Control Board to assemble: (1) an independent Expert Panel to provide advice to the State of California on the feasibility of developing criteria for DPR; and (2) an Advisory Group to provide input to the Expert Panel and SWRCB on DPR.

- The Expert Panel (required under California Water Code Section 13565) is administered by National Water Research Institute (NWRI), and has been advising SWRCB on public health issues and scientific and technical matters regarding the feasibility of developing water recycling criteria for DPR. The panel is required to be comprised of, at a minimum: a toxicologist, an engineer licensed in the state with at least three years' experience in wastewater treatment, an engineer licensed in the state with at least three years' experience in treatment of drinking water supplies and knowledge of drinking water standards, an epidemiologist, a limnologist, a microbiologist, and a chemist.
- The Expert Panel is assessing potential areas of research, and is using a “Briefing Paper” approach to address and fulfill its charge to investigate the feasibility of developing DPR criteria. Each paper will focus on one technical/scientific topic and address: relevance to the Panel’s charge; pertinent available technical and/or research information; and overall panel findings, conclusions, and recommendations (e.g., practical engineering

and/or monitoring solutions, and research topics/approach). The draft report states that the full range of “research needs” does not have to be completed before development of DPR regulations and criteria may be undertaken.

- The Advisory Group was established by SWRCB to provide advice on DPR to both the Expert Panel and DDW. The Advisory Group’s composition includes members representing environmental organizations, public health organizations, taxpayer advocate organizations, water and wastewater agencies, government agencies, and others. The Advisory Group is developing a series of recommendation on DPR on a range of topics for consideration by SWRCB.

The Expert Panel and Advisory Group have provided their recommendations to SWRCB. Based on these recommendations, SWRCB will provide a final report to the Legislature by the end of the year on the feasibility of developing uniform water recycling criteria for DPR.

WateReuse (watereuse.org) is a trade association focusing on advancing laws, policy and funding to increase water reuse. The WateReuse vision is of a nation where every community has a safe, reliable, locally-controlled water supply that protects the environment, sustains economic growth, and provides a high quality of life. WateReuse California is the California section of the national WateReuse organization.

For more information about the Division of Drinking Water, visit:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/RecycledWater.shtml

For more information about State Water Resources Control Board visit:

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>

For more information about WateReuse California, visit:

<https://watereuse.org/sections/watereuse-california/>

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