



PROFILES IN REUSE: California



The amount of water on Earth does not change—all water has been recycled naturally since the beginning of time.

While nearly 70% of the planet is covered by water, only 2.5% is freshwater, and only 1% is accessible to humans. Water reuse, also known as water recycling, is the process of intentionally capturing water sources including wastewater and graywater and cleaning it for a designated beneficial freshwater purpose. Common uses for recycled water include drinking, irrigation, industrial processes, groundwater replenishment, and environmental restoration.








WATER REUSE IN CALIFORNIA

In 1918, the state of California developed the first water reuse regulations in the United States to help irrigate its booming agricultural sector. Since then, California has remained a global leader in water reuse. Today, California recycles over one million acre-feet of water each year to benefit people and the environment. That’s enough water savings to meet the indoor and outdoor needs of at least two million households! California communities are securing their water future by producing highly purified recycled water for drinking and recharging aquifers, as well as by expanding non-drinking water reuse for agriculture and irrigation, and recycling more water within buildings.

CALIFORNIA’S WATER SUPPLY OF THE FUTURE

California is leading on a new frontier of water recycling. In December 2023, the state adopted regulations for direct potable reuse, allowing communities to purify water that can be blended directly into their drinking water supplies. Many urban agencies are now considering the development of next-generation water reuse systems under the new regulations.

RECYCLED WATER IS:

-  **COST EFFECTIVE**
Reusing water often costs less than new alternative supplies such as building reservoirs or purchasing water from other water rights holders.
-  **ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND**
Reusing water alleviates pressure on California’s freshwater sources and natural systems.
-  **RELIABLE**
Because wastewater is renewable, recycled water is a sustainable source that’s available rain or shine.
-  **LOCALLY CONTROLLED**
California communities that use recycled water can reduce their reliance on unpredictable precipitation and imported water.
-  **SAFE**
Water is purified to meet stringent state and federal water quality standards.

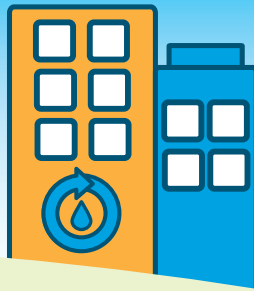
WHY INVEST IN WATER REUSE?

California faces increasing cycles of drought and water scarcity, on top of the existing challenges posed by an uneven distribution of population, water supplies, and water rights. Investment in water reuse can contribute to a modern, sustainable, and stable water future—allowing families to flourish and businesses to grow. California communities and businesses are investing in water reuse to ensure that our residents have safe drinking water supplies, our industries have water to expand and create jobs, our farmers have water to grow food, our environment is protected, and our economic future remains strong and secure.

WATER REUSE IN CALIFORNIA

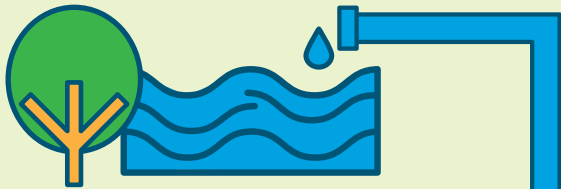
REFILLING OUR RESERVOIRS

In dry years, surface water reservoirs across the state don't collect enough water from rain and snowmelt. Water reuse provides a convenient and drought-resistant alternative. The City of San Diego and Las Virgenes Municipal Water District in Los Angeles County are among those planning to use purified recycled water to augment their reservoirs.



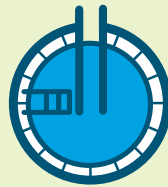
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

In dense urban areas, recycling water within a building or in a cluster of buildings can offer many benefits. Onsite reuse preserves water resources, reduces strain on aging sewer and stormwater infrastructure, and serves as an emergency local backup water source. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has developed ordinances and incentives to catalyze a revolution in onsite water reuse.



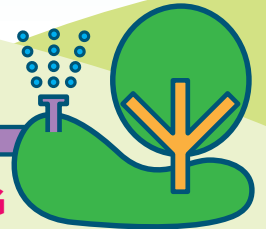
SUPPLYING WATER DIRECT TO OUR TAPS

The technology to purify recycled water and return it directly to our drinking water systems has been tested and proven. Groundbreaking regulations in California are making it possible for these systems to be built in communities statewide. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power are major water suppliers that are developing plans to meet the new regulations and deliver a new water source to the region's drinking water systems.



GREENING OUR CITIES

Irrigation of parks, urban landscaping, and golf courses is the largest use of recycled water in California, using over 200,000 acre-feet per year. Municipal irrigation projects help keep our surroundings beautiful and familiarize more Californians with water reuse. Cities such as Irvine and Burbank, and many communities in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, manage major water reuse systems for irrigation.



RECHARGING OUR GROUNDWATER

Water leaders in Los Angeles County ushered in the nation's first use of recycled water for groundwater replenishment in 1962: The Montebello Forebay Groundwater Recharge Project. Today, groundwater replenishment is a major contributor to water supply across California. Projects include Water Replenishment District's facilities in Long Beach and Pico Rivera, Orange County Water District's Groundwater Replenishment System, and Pure Water Soquel in Santa Cruz County.

GROWING OUR CROPS

California produces nearly half of US-grown fruits, nuts, and vegetables. Many are irrigated with recycled water, preserving precious drinking water supplies. Major agricultural water recycling efforts include Sacramento Area Sewer District's Harvest Water program, Eastern Municipal Water District's recycled water system in Riverside County, and Monterey One Water's Salinas Valley Reclamation Project.



About the WateReuse Association

The WateReuse Association is the nation's only trade association solely dedicated to advancing laws, policy, funding, and public acceptance of recycled water. WateReuse represents a coalition of utilities that recycle water, businesses that support the development of recycled water projects, and consumers of recycled water. In addition to supporting members throughout the country, WateReuse has active local sections in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, the Mid-Atlantic, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina, Ohio, the Pacific Northwest, and Texas. To learn more, visit www.watereuse.org.