

NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPPER DISTRICT WINS TWO CONSECUTIVE AWARDS FOR 2015 WATER SMART CITY CHALLENGE

San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments; California Special Districts Association Honors UD

MONROVIA, CA – The Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Upper District) has won two consecutive awards for its first-of-its-kind water conservation program, *The San Gabriel Valley Water Smart City Challenge*. The Upper District announced today that it has received the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments 2015 Sustainability Award and the California Special Districts Association Excellence in Outreach Award.

“We are extremely proud of our efforts to partner with our cities, and we are honored to be recognized by these two esteemed agencies,” said Michael Touhey, Board President of Upper District. “A lot of planning, discipline and hard work goes into our partnerships with our cities, and I’m pleased that these efforts have been recognized. These awards are especially extraordinary because it recognizes innovation during this historic drought.”

The SGVCG Sustainability Award is for “an agency - a SGVCOG member agency or a partner agency - for a project or program that exemplifies *sustainability* in the areas of water, energy, solid waste, open space, or air quality,” according to the Council’s website. The Upper District will receive the second award during the CSDA conference in Monterey on Sept. 24th.

Both awards recognize Upper District’s San Gabriel Valley Water Smart City Challenge, which called upon all 18 cities within Upper District’s service territory to lead by example and adopt best practices for water conservation. In response to Governor Jerry Brown’s emergency drought declaration in January 2014, Upper District’s Board of Directors unveiled the creative public outreach campaign that utilized existing conservation programs with innovative outreach components that encouraged cities to promote drought awareness to their residents.

“This drought is serious and we all need to be as innovative and cooperative as possible,” Touhey said. “The Water Smart City Challenge is a shining example of a local water district communicating and collaborating with their cities to promote drought awareness to their communities.”

The Upper District awarded top honors in the Water Smart City Challenge to the cities of Azusa, Rosemead, and West Covina, and each received a \$50,000 grant towards a sustainable watershed project. But across the district,

the program yielded quantifiable and sustainable water savings, a more educated and engaged public and a model for other municipalities, districts and states.

Since implementing the challenge, rebates paid to residents in Upper District's service territory increased by almost 1,100%. In fulfilling the challenge requirements, 1,200 free high efficiency toilets were distributed at city events and nine cities hosted gardening classes for their residents. Twenty-six large landscape surveys were completed at various city parks and facilities. Of these sites, 19 were retrofitted with an annual water savings of 160 acre feet. Three cities passed low-impact development storm water ordinances; five cities adopted model water conservation ordinances and 24 city councilmembers and 26 city staff were educated through a variety of Upper District's water-related forums and events. All told, these conservation efforts will save over 350 acre feet a year, that's over 113 million gallons of water annually.

The challenge encouraged cities to: bring awareness of the drought to their residents; seek a citywide water use reduction; adopt city policies that contribute to the overall sustainability of the San Gabriel River Watershed; and promote conservation and water-saving rebates for businesses and residents via the Southland's regional rebate program: www.socalwatersmart.com. In addition to promoting water-saving rebates, participating cities engaged their residents on water conservation and drought awareness through city websites, PSAs, social media and newsletters; hosted high efficiency toilet giveaways with their water retailer; hosted drought-tolerant landscape classes for their residents; and approved municipal ordinances that addressed citywide water conservation standards.

Upper District's mission is to provide a reliable, sustainable, diversified and affordable portfolio of high quality water supplies to the San Gabriel Valley; including water conservation, recycled water, storm water capture, storage, water transfers and imported water. Upper District services nearly one million people in its 144 square mile service territory. Governed by a five member elected board of directors, Upper District is a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Annually, more than 78 billion gallons of water is used in Upper District's service area. For more information about Upper District, please visit our website www.upperdistrict.org or call 626-443-2297.

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