



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CITY OF UKIAH & REGIONAL LEADERS CELEBRATE RECYCLING OF ONE BILLION GALLONS OF WATER WITH CELEBRATION AT CITY WATER RECYCLING FACILITY**

**Ukiah, CA. October 6, 2023.** – On Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, the City of Ukiah welcomed regional leaders, state water regulators, and a local fifth grade class to celebrate the significant milestone of recycling one billion gallons of water through its state-of-the-art water recycling facility. The facility is key to the City’s strategy of responding responsibly to reduced availability of water resources. By recycling water, the City reduces demand on the Russian River and improves overall sustainability for the region, serving an important role in supporting local agriculture and economic activity.

“This project was critically important for getting us through an epic drought. We were able to deliver recycled water for ag, which is the economic engine of our valley. This reduces diversions from the Russian River, and reduces discharges to the river,” said Sean White, Ukiah Director of Water Resources. “It’s amazing how it all works together between our groundwater facilities, our surface water facilities and our recycled water facilities.”

The water recycling initiative reduces the demand on the Russian River while also supporting the region's overall sustainability. With an offset of almost 90 percent of its water use through recycling and groundwater recharge, Ukiah is setting a benchmark for other cities to emulate. This initiative helps meet conservation goals and bolsters regional sustainability.

"This recycled water project is a major accomplishment that stands as a model," said Mari Rodin, Ukiah Mayor. "As we celebrate one billion gallons recycled so far, we're not just marking a milestone, but reaffirming our commitment to the future. Recycling water is more than just a technical achievement. It's a statement that says we value our environment and we understand the challenge posed by the changing climate and the unpredictability of our rainy seasons."

The City received a congressional certificate of recognition honoring the project. "Congratulations to the City of Ukiah and its groundbreaking Purple Pipe Project for producing one billion gallons of treated recycled water!" said Rep. Jared Huffman. "Water conservation is a high priority throughout California, and Ukiah's Recycled Water System provides water for irrigation of agriculture, parks, and schools. This achievement is a model for

utility management and contributes to the region’s vibrant agriculture, reduces water diversions from the Russian River, and improves environmental habitat by providing an alternative source for frost protection.”

Students of Mrs. Williams’ fifth grade class at Yokayo Elementary were also present, gaining insights into the significance of recycled water for the state and the region’s long-term water supply strategy. The students were treated to an informative tour of the water recycling facility, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices for future generations.

“Imagine the Russian River, dry and empty, farmers without water to feed their crops and kids without green grass to play on. Is this the future we want?” stated Axel Alvarado, a fifth grader at Yokayo Elementary School. “Without our water treatment plant, we would not have enough water for our future. This saves water and allows us all to have the water we need, and that is worth celebrating.”

The Ukiah Recycled Water Project, constructed in phased segments, has already achieved significant milestones with the completion of its initial three phases. Phases 1-3 brought the project online by 2019 with the installation of 8 miles of pipeline, 66 million gallons of storage, an enlarged chlorine contact basin, and a pumping facility. The cost for Phases 1-3 was \$34 million, funded by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) through a low-interest loan and \$9 million in grants.

"This is a 21st century project for these 21st century challenges that we're all facing," said Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. "This project represents the ability to share across the community, and the ability to do more with Mother Nature – and that’s an incredible model."

The SWRCB recently awarded Ukiah a \$53.7 million grant for the Project’s Phase 4 expansion, which is currently underway. This expansion will increase the Project’s capacity to 1,500 acre-feet per year, allowing for the irrigation of significant areas including Vinewood Park, Frank Zeek School, Pomolita School, soccer fields, Ukiah High School, the Ukiah Cemetery, Anton Stadium, Giorno Park, Todd Grove Park, and the Ukiah Valley Golf Course.

  
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