



SCV Water Year One: Delivering on a Promise

By Bill Cooper, Inaugural President, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency

One year ago, I wrote a column for *The Signal* promising that the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (SCV Water) would “bring greater transparency, stronger water management, reduced costs and increased savings to our customers across the Valley.”

I am proud to report today that SCV Water has delivered on these promises.

As we begin our second year of operations, it is important to reflect on the successes of our first year on behalf of our nearly 300,000 customers.

Cost Savings: In our first year of operations, cost savings exceeded \$5 million – significantly outpacing initial estimates. This is a direct reflection of how leaders of the respective legacy agencies (Newhall County Water District, Valencia Water Co., Santa Clarita Water Division) came together to identify ways to save for our customers. These savings are likely to continue into the future, leading to greater water reliability and stronger reinvestment in local infrastructure.

Local Jobs and Veteran Support: I am especially proud that the SCV Water Community Workforce Agreement was established to prioritize the hiring of local residents and veterans. This was a promise made as part of our founding legislation (SB 634) and our board quickly adopted a plan that would put among our most deserving local residents to work as part of up to \$200 million of planned recycled water projects.

Valencia Water Co.: The former private water company was folded into SCV Water – a public water agency with an elected board of directors – in January 2018, well ahead of the deadline established by SB 634. This has been a long-term, customer-focused goal to ensure accountability and access for all Valley residents.

Water Reliability and Watershed Sustainability: SCV Water also took major steps forward to long-term reliability.

- We established the Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency in partnership with the City of Santa Clarita and Los Angeles County to assure long-range planning and management of our local groundwater resources results in a sustainable water source for the future.
- SCV Water initiated additional legal efforts to protect our local water from contamination, and to recover the costs from responsible parties.
- Staff began a watershed-wide planning effort – a first of its kind – to develop alternative water supplies, like groundwater recharge and recycled water.
- We made substantial progress on expanding the capability of groundwater banking and retrieval facilities in the Central Valley where we have a significant amount of water stored away for drought years.

- SCV Water's Board supported the advancement of the California Water Fix – a long-term solution to California's chronic water supply challenges.

Customer Service: Perhaps most importantly, we never lost sight of our customers. We know that most residents simply want cost-effective, clean and reliable water coming from their taps. This remains our primary goal and we're so proud that we have been able to continue the high level of service Santa Clarita Valley residents have come to know – from both the legacy agencies and now SCV Water.

This year proved that the formation of SCV Water was indeed the once-in-a-generation opportunity we believed it could be. In fact, residents are already beginning to benefit from its promise.

The cost savings alone - \$5 million in just one year – will have a meaningful impact on our customers. These savings can be reinvested into infrastructure and lower long-term costs. They can also be used to stabilize rates to protect from external factors, like rising costs for energy and imported water supply.

Even with this success, the best is still yet to come.

As we enter our second year of service, we are more eager than ever to take your SCV Water to its full potential and further establish ourselves as a best-in-class agency on behalf of our customers.

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