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EPA Announces \$183 Million to Improve Water Quality, Infrastructure in California

Agency highlights water conservation project in the city of Fresno, reducing water use by 25%

FRESNO – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld announced more than \$183 million in funding to invest in California for statewide improvements in local water infrastructure and the reduction of water pollution. Blumenfeld was joined by Fresno Public Utilities Director Thomas Esqueda, and other state and local officials for the announcement at an event highlighting \$51 million in federal funding that was used to install water meters within the city of Fresno. The event was held at the home of Bruce and Amy Roberts, who participated in the water meter program.

“Water is the lifeblood of our communities and EPA is committed to working with our state and city partners to protect this precious resource,” said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA’s Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “Today’s funding will help create construction jobs, develop infrastructure and conserve resources as we deal with challenge of climate change.”

The City of Fresno, through a zero percent interest loan from the state, used the \$51 million in drinking water funding to purchase and install 73,152 water meters in residential homes in several neighborhoods. The meters help homeowners and the city easily identify how much water homes are using. The meters have an electronic device that helps the city obtain quicker and more accurate meter readings. Since the installation of the meters was completed this year, water usage in the city has decreased by 25 percent.

“Water conservation and drinking water quality are of utmost importance to the health and welfare of the people of the State of California, not only as we deal with the challenges of this devastating drought, but as we face future droughts,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “The State Water Resources Control Board is glad to work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in making this important funding source available to communities for both safe drinking water and water conservation.”

During a drought every drop of water counts, and meters are critical components in the effort to decrease the loss from leaks in the supply system. About 283 billion gallons of water are lost from leaks in California’s urban water systems every year. This lost water accounts for \$250 million in energy costs to transport water. The ability to detect leaks through the installation of water meters can reduce water use and save energy -- conveying water accounts for 6.3% of the state’s total electricity requirements.

“Fresno has been a leader in water conservation for over 20 years with a history of proactive programs such as water meters and our free water-wise consultation service,” said Thomas Esqueda, Director of Public Utilities for the City of Fresno. “It is crucial for Fresno’s future to continue working with partners like the EPA so that we can provide a safe, clean, reliable water supply for generations to come.”

The \$183,500,000 in additional funding announced today will be used for California water quality projects that will reduce water pollution, improve municipal drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, make water and energy projects more efficient, and provide technical assistance to communities.

In addition, the State Water Board is working with the City of Fresno on a Consolidation Incentive Project with the Orange Center School. The project, estimated to cost approximately \$250 million, envisions a new surface water treatment plant to supplement the city’s existing ground water supply. It will also extend water service to the school to meet all safe drinking water standards, via a 14-inch water main, freeing the school from relying on their existing well water. The Consolidation Incentive Program encourages larger water systems to partner with other communities to obtain priority for funding and expand the benefits and cost-effectiveness of system improvements.

A map of the water meter installations in the City of Fresno can be found at: <http://go.usa.gov/vk6w>

For more information on the SWRCB’s Consolidation Incentive Program, please visit:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/services/funding/ConsolidationIncentive.shtml

For more information on EPA’s Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, visit:
https://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/dwsrf/index.cfm

For more information on EPA’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund, visit:
https://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/cwsrf/cwsrf_index.cfm

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