

## Project Factsheet

### The Acres Ramona – Phase 1 Water Project

#### December 5, 2024

#### **Background**

In October of 2022 the State Water Resources Control Board approved a workplan to allow Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) to provide technical assistance to the Acres Community under the State Water Board’s Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) program.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the project is to provide safe drinking water to homes in the Acres which are on private wells for their drinking water supply or receive water from Ramona Municipal Water District (“District”) through extended service line connections. A Feasibility Study was completed in August 2022 and RCAC completed public outreach in the Acres to determine interest in connecting to the District’s water system and replacing spaghetti lines with connections to new water lines at the customer’s property line. Based on the Community’s interest in the project, the District was able to apply for construction funding from the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Program (SDIRWMP). A total funding amount of \$3,755,000 was allocated from the SDIRWMP for construction of pipelines, installation of meters and connection fees to the District. Additional funding was provided through the State Water Board’s SAFER program to complete the plans and specifications, bid documents and environmental documents for the project. The planning stage is nearing completion, and the project will be moving into the construction phase in early 2025. Construction of the project is expected to be initiated by March 2025 and go through December 2025.

**Project Area:** The project area is located within the District’s existing service area. The area being addressed is north of Main Street and south of N. Kalbaugh Street, including parcels located off N. Kalbaugh, Toub, Beverly, Robertson, Vermont, Durgin, Main and La Brea Streets in San Diego County. A more detailed map of the project area is attached.

**Problem being addressed:** Testing of water from private wells in the subject area shows that many of the private wells contain nitrate and uranium in excess of the State’s primary drinking water standards. Of the ten wells that were tested, the water from eight exceeded the nitrate standard, and the water from nine exceeded the uranium standard. The water from the wells is also high in total dissolved solids (salts) and the quality is continuing to degrade. Connection to the District’s water system will provide residents with a safe and reliable drinking water supply.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part under the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Drinking Water Program through an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the foregoing, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

**Stakeholder Group Partners:** Partners/Stakeholders currently working on this project have included residents from the Acres Community, the District, State Water Board, and RCAC.

**Next Steps:** The construction phase of the project will have an impact on the community and close coordination with the residents is required for implementation of the construction. Once the District receives bids for the project and selects a contractor, we will reach out to you again. In the meantime, RCAC and the District is reaching out to coordinate with you to ensure a smooth transition. Please be aware:

1. The construction will take several months as the pipeline is installed in the streets of the Acres Community.
2. Residents receiving water through spaghetti lines will have the water meter relocated to the front or as close as possible to the front of the property obtaining service where the new water lines are being installed. These residents will need to complete a Participation Form for Relocated Connections. This will require shutdowns as this transition occurs and will require coordination with property owners as the connection is moved from the old meter to the new meter. The District will notify each homeowner affected by the shutdown of water service in advance of the shutdown.
3. Residents on well water without an existing water meter who would like service from the District will need to submit a Participation Form for New Connections.
4. We suggest that you submit your Participation Form as soon as possible. Further details on how this is done is included in the attached Q &A document. The District will work with residents who submit Participation Forms to determine the best location for that service.

For more information, please contact:

**Toby Roy from RCAC at (760) 585-8754 or [Toby.Roy @RCAC.org](mailto:Toby.Roy@RCAC.org)**





## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Water Quality Concerns for Customers on Well Water are the Primary Reason for this Project

- **Is the water from my well safe to drink?** Water that meets all primary drinking water standards is considered safe to drink for the majority of the population. Private well water in the project area may contain nitrate and uranium in concentrations exceeding their respective drinking water standards, and so may be unhealthy for consumption for some populations.
- **What are the concerns about drinking water containing nitrates over the drinking water standard?** Nitrate in drinking water at levels above 10 mg/L (milligrams per liter or parts per million (ppm)) is a health risk for infants of less than six months of age. Such nitrate levels in drinking water can interfere with the capacity of the infant's blood to carry oxygen, resulting in serious illness; symptoms include shortness of breath and blueness of the skin. Nitrate levels above 10 mg/L may also affect the ability of the blood to carry oxygen in other individuals, such as pregnant women and those with specific enzyme deficiencies.

If your well water contains nitrates above 10 mg/L, **you should not:** (1) Give the water to infants under six months of age, (2) Use the water to prepare juice and formula for infants under six months of age (3) Drink the water if you are pregnant, (4) Boil the water since boiling will only increase the concentration. If you have other concerns, you should contact your health care provider.

- **What are nitrates and nitrites and how do nitrates get into the water?** Nitrates and nitrites are natural compounds made up of nitrogen and oxygen. Nitrates in groundwater in rural settings may be associated with septic systems, wastewater, confined animal feeding operations or fertilizer use.
- **What are the concerns about drinking water containing uranium over the drinking water standard?** Drinking water containing uranium above the drinking water standard does not pose an immediate health risk. However, some people who drink the water over many years may have kidney problems, or an increased risk of getting cancer. Bathing and showering with water that contains uranium is not a health concern.
- **What is uranium and how does it get into the water?** Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element found in rocks, soil and water and is commonly found in part of rural San Diego County. Uranium enters the water by leaching from soil and rocks. The presence of bicarbonates in irrigation water can contribute to the mobilization of the uranium.

## Connecting to Ramona Municipal Water District's Potable Water System

- **What are the homeowner responsibilities for the connection to the District's water system under the consolidation project?**

Property owners currently on well water, that would like to connect to the District's water system, will need to run a private on-site lateral from their house to the new meter and backflow device. The District will place the meter in front or as close as possible to the front of the property near the edge of the road right-of-way. Homeowners may coordinate directly with the District on the meter location upon applying for water service.

Property owners with existing meters and "spaghetti line" connections will get the meter relocated to the front or as close as possible to the front of the property and will be required to reconnect the water lateral on their property to the new meter and backflow device location near the edge of the road right-of-way. The District and contractor will notify the homeowners with lines of any planned shutdowns as required to complete the water meter relocation.

The District's contractor will install any required backflow preventers at each meter. The installation and testing of the new or relocated backflow devices is eligible for grant funding; however, covering these costs will be subject to grant funding availability. If a homeowner with a current "spaghetti line" connection would like to keep their existing backflow preventer, they may remove it, or relocate it at the time of the switch over. For all contractor installed backflow devices, the contractor will test the device after installation. Property owners will own the backflow at the end of the project and will be responsible for annual testing of the backflow device.

- **How much will it cost property owners to connect to the District's water system?**

Proposed water system infrastructure is funded through grant funding. Property owners will not have to pay for new pipeline infrastructure up to the meter and backflow device, subject to available funding. All property owners are responsible for the costs for any work done on their own property after the backflow device, including connecting the new meter or relocated meter to their homes.

For new connections (not relocated connections), capacity fees are required to be paid to the District and the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), the District's wholesaler:

- New residential services for existing homes on private wells: Subject to availability of grant funding, the capacity fees for a connection to the District and SDCWA may be funded from the available grant money. This will be on a first come first serve basis.

- **New water services for undeveloped land:** The property owner must pay the full capacity and connection fees in order to obtain service from the District's water system: Currently \$12,635, plus meter and service lateral installation fees, which average approximately \$4,900. New water services for undeveloped land will also be required to purchase, install and test a backflow device at their own cost if one is required.
- **How can I request to be connected to the District?**  
Please contact the District's engineering department at 760.789.1330 and request a new connection as part of **The Acres Water Pipelines Project**. Only the owner of the property can request an application for water service and will be required to provide the property address or Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for the property where water service is being requested and will be required to complete and sign a Participation Form. Typical water meter size for single family residences is ¾-inch which can provide up to 25 gallons per minute of flow. If a homeowner would like a larger meter, the homeowner must pay for the cost difference between a ¾-inch meter and the desired meter size.
- **What would a typical monthly water bill be for residential customers in the District's service area?** Water use and associated water bills for customers in the District's service area varies significantly depending on size of parcels and the specific uses of water on those parcels. Any owner connecting to the District for water supply would be subject to the current District rate structure. Customers with a ¾-inch meter will pay a base rate of \$46.54 per month and a water consumption rate and pumping of \$8.74 per unit of water (1 unit=100 cubic feet). This would result in an average monthly cost of about \$107.72<sup>2</sup> per household based on current average water use in Ramona for indoor water use.
- **Will I be able to keep my well?** Well owners who connect to the District's water system may keep or abandon their well. Well owners who keep their wells will be required to have a backflow preventer installed at their meter, in accordance with the requirements of the District. Annual testing of the backflow preventer will also be required. The cost of the annual backflow device testing is typically less than \$100. The list of approved backflow testers is updated annually and is available at <https://www.rmwd.org/customer-service/backflow-testing> Properties with abandoned wells will still require a backflow device unless the well is properly destroyed in accordance with the California Water Well Standards and county permitting requirements.
- **Will my well water be metered?** Well owners will not be required to meter their wells.

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<sup>2</sup> Assumes 74.2 gallons per person per day and 3.07 people per household according to the District's 2022 Water Master Plan Update. This is equivalent to 7 units (hundred cubic feet, HCF) of water.