



August 20, 2026

The Honorable Sheila F. Hanson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: Orange County Water District response to the Findings and
Recommendations of the Grand Jury 2025-2026 report titled: PFAS and
Public Awareness A Closer Look at Orange County Drinking Water

Dear Judge Hanson:

Please accept this letter in accordance with the directive included in the Grand Jury 2025-2026 report titled: PFAS and Public Awareness A Closer Look at Orange County Drinking Water, that the Orange County Water District (OCWD) provide responses to the report Findings (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7 and F8) along with Recommendations (R1, R2, R3, R5 and R6).

OCWD wishes to thank the Grand Jury for the commendations in the report documenting our PFAS treatment program, specifically the EPA Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan, state and federal grant funding efforts, and litigation settlement funds to support this effort. Recognizing our Groundwater Producers agreement to fully fund PFAS design and construction capital cost and a 50% cost share of O&M as a strong model for future government/private-sector cost-sharing agreements is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denis R. Bilodeau".

Denis R. Bilodeau, P.E.
President

cc: Grand Jury

RESPONSES TO THE ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT PFAS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS A CLOSER LOOK AT ORANGE COUNTY DRINKING WATER

FINDINGS

- F1 Commercial and industrial chemical manufacturers are a major source of PFAS contamination. Settlement litigation funds are available for community water systems to make claims.

OCWD and many of its local retail water agencies (Producers) impacted by PFAS are participating in a national aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) multidistrict litigation (MDL) No. 2873 against PFAS manufacturers including 3M and Dupont to recover costs addressing PFAS impacts. Settlements have been reached with several of the manufacturers, and payments totaling \$78 million have been received by OCWD and participating Producers to date. Future scheduled payments under these existing settlements are scheduled and additional settlements are expected.

- F2 PFAS is widespread, and contamination has been detected in Orange County groundwater sources. Community water systems are required to report PFAS monitoring results in their annual Consumer Confidence Reports.

OCWD agrees that community water systems are required to report PFAS monitoring results in their annual Consumer Confidence Reports if the concentration is above a state set Report Detection Level, consistent with requirements established by the state Division of Drinking Water.

- F3 PFAS exposure is associated with potential adverse human health effects.

OCWD is aware of studies showing that PFAS exposure above certain thresholds can be associated with potential adverse human health effects.

- F4 OCWD has taken a proactive leadership role in addressing PFAS in the Orange County Groundwater Basin, though PFAS treatment implementation varies across local cities and water districts.

OCWD and the Producers it serves provide safe and reliable drinking water that consistently meets all state and federal drinking water standards. Despite playing no role in releasing PFAS into the environment, OCWD is working with its Producers to remove PFAS from local water supplies in

order to comply with state and federal regulations. More than 100 out of 200 Producer wells within OCWD have been impacted due to various state and federal regulations. At this time, only two (2) of 19 Producer water systems have continued to report non-detects for PFAS: the cities of Seal Beach and La Palma.

- F5 Groundwater supplies must either be treated to remove PFAS or must be replaced with imported water supplies that are significantly more expensive than groundwater. Over \$500 million is being spent on construction, operations, and maintenance of PFAS treatment facilities in Orange County.

OCWD concurs that impacted groundwater production wells must either be treated to remove PFAS or must be replaced with more expensive imported water. OCWD estimates it will spend over \$600 million on capital costs (design, construction, inspection) and total costs including operations and maintenance are expected to be approximately \$1.8 billion in Orange County over the next 30 years.

- F6 Orange County drinking water meets or exceeds state and federal standards and is safe for consumption without additional home filtration.

OCWD concurs with this finding.

- F7 Research on newer PFAS compounds and long-term exposure effects is ongoing.

OCWD concurs with this finding.

- F8 There are limited online PFAS education and outreach programs among Orange County water retailers. Most retailers rely on OCWD for PFAS education and outreach. PFAS advisories were included in approximately 55% of the Orange County water retailers' annual water quality reports in 2025.

OCWD maintains a PFAS section on its website www.ocwd.com, which contains a PFAS Fact Sheet and a Quarterly PFAS Update. When requested, OCWD works with its Producers to provide agency-specific fact sheets and other information for public distribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 By September 30, 2026, Orange County Water District (OCWD), in coordination with state and federal agencies, should pursue cost recovery efforts against PFAS manufacturers to offset treatment, monitoring, and long-term remediation costs incurred by local water agencies and ratepayers. [F1, F5]

OCWD and several of its Producers have already sued PFAS manufacturers, including 3M and Dupont to recover costs associated with addressing PFAS impacts. Settlements have been reached with several of the manufacturers, and payments totaling \$78 million have been received to date with additional payments and settlements expected.

- R2 By July 1, 2029, OCWD and its member agencies should monitor PFAS in groundwater and surface water sources and promptly implement PFAS treatment when response levels are exceeded. [F2, F4]

OCWD continues to maintain a proactive and comprehensive monitoring program for PFAS and funds treatment in cooperation with its Producers. These PFAS water quality monitoring efforts have continued for more than a decade and include multiple US EPA Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule programs that include PFAS (UCMR3 and UCMR5) as well as multiple PFAS monitoring orders issued by the California Division of Drinking Water. OCWD has steadily expanded PFAS monitoring to include additional drinking water wells, groundwater monitoring wells, and surface waters throughout the Orange County groundwater basin and the Santa Ana River watershed. Through these efforts, OCWD will ensure that all its Producer agencies meet the initial monitoring requirements contained within US EPA's PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR). OCWD has continued to meet with and maintain communication with many local water agencies and regulatory agencies to share PFAS monitoring results and related information. OCWD has also performed multiple phases of pilot testing of PFAS treatment media to help Producers determine the best treatment options. OCWD has implemented a PFAS treatment policy to fund 100% of the design and construction, and 50% of the operation and maintenance costs for Producer drinking water well treatment facilities. OCWD and the Producer water systems have worked closely and collaboratively to develop this PFAS treatment policy and maintain PFAS agreements in support of the policy resulting in implementation of treatment throughout OCWD well in advance of much of the rest of the country.

- R3 By September 30, 2026, OCWD, in collaboration with the Orange County Health Care Agency, should update public education and guidance continually as scientific understanding and regulatory standards evolve. [F3]

OCWD continues to provide public education and guidance on scientific understanding, regulatory standards changes, progress on PFAS treatment infrastructure, upcoming webinars/conference presentations, and available resources for review amongst other topics on its website and social media channels, and through its Quarterly PFAS Updates and monthly Hydrospectives newsletter.

- R4 By July 1, 2029, all Orange County water retailers should consistently include a PFAS advisory, treatment facilities status, and compliance information in consumer confidence reports and on agency websites, using clear and understandable language for the public. [F2, F8]

OCWD concurs with this recommendation.

- R5 By September 30, 2026, OCWD and all Orange County water retailers should enhance coordinated public education efforts to reassure their customers about drinking water safety. [F6, F8]

OCWD has and will continue providing the public with educational PFAS information, resources, and updates posted on our website and distributed with our monthly newsletter.

- R6 By September 30, 2026, OCWD should continuously monitor national and international PFAS research developments and incorporate new findings into future groundwater management, treatment planning, and regulatory compliance strategies. [F7]

OCWD has and will continue working with and sharing information with local, national and international water agencies on treatment strategies, research and development on treatment technologies and regulatory compliance.