



September 1, 2026

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

Re: South Coast Water District Response to the 2025–2026 Orange County Grand Jury Report: PFAS and Public Awareness - A Closer Look at Orange County Drinking Water

Dear Presiding Judge Hanson:

Pursuant to California Penal Code §§ 933 and 933.05, the Board of Directors of the South Coast Water District (SCWD or District) submits the following response to the findings and recommendations of the 2025–2026 Orange County Grand Jury Report, PFAS and Public Awareness: A Closer Look at Orange County Drinking Water, published June 9, 2026. SCWD is required to respond to Findings F2, F6, and F8, and to Recommendations R4 and R5.

District Background and Water Supply Context

South Coast Water District is a South Orange County special district providing drinking water distribution and wastewater collection services to the coastal communities of Dana Point, South Laguna Beach, and portions of San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano. Wastewater treatment for SCWD's service area is provided by the South Orange County Wastewater Authority (SOCWA). SCWD is not a member agency of the Orange County Water District (OCWD) and does not draw water from the Orange County Groundwater Basin.

SCWD's water supply consists of approximately 85 percent imported treated surface water delivered through the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), and approximately 15 percent locally produced water from SCWD's Groundwater Recovery Facility (GRF), which extracts water from the San Juan Basin and treats it using reverse osmosis (RO) (the most effective available technology for removing PFAS compounds from drinking water) and iron and manganese removal. SCWD also operates the Joint Regional Water Supply System (JRWSS) under contract; that system is supplied 100 percent by MWD imported water via the Diemer Filtration Plant and/or the Weymouth Plant. All SCWD and JRWSS water sources comply with state and federal drinking water standards, including all applicable PFAS requirements.

Board of Directors

Scott Goldman
President

Joe Muller
Vice President

Rick Erkeneff
Director

Bill Green
Director

Doug Erdman
Director



RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS

Finding 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.

Finding F2: SCWD Partially Agrees

SCWD agrees that PFAS is widespread and that contamination has been detected in Orange County groundwater sources. SCWD partially disagrees, however, with the finding's characterization that community water systems are currently required to report PFAS monitoring results in their annual Consumer Confidence Reports. Under the EPA's April 2024 National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for PFAS, public water systems are required to complete initial monitoring by April 26, 2027, with the obligation to provide the public with information on PFAS levels in drinking water beginning in 2027. Mandatory CCR reporting of PFAS compliance monitoring results under the federal rule does not take effect until April 26, 2027.

SCWD also notes that its operational context differs significantly from that of the OCWD member agencies. SCWD's local groundwater source is the San Juan Basin, served through the GRF using reverse osmosis treatment, a process that effectively removes PFAS compounds prior to delivery to customers. SCWD is not connected to the Santa Ana River recharge system or the OCWD basin where contamination has been detected.

SCWD monitors for PFAS at the Stonehill Well and at the GRF treated water on a quarterly basis as required by applicable SWRCB general monitoring orders. Although PFAS compounds have been detected in source groundwater at the Stonehill Well, the GRF's reverse osmosis treatment system consistently achieves an average PFAS removal rate of 98.8%, and all treated water delivered to customers is well below the Maximum Contaminant Levels established under the EPA's federal PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation. No PFAS MCL violations have been recorded for any SCWD or JRWSS water source.

Notwithstanding the current regulatory timeline, SCWD has voluntarily included a PFAS Advisory section in both its 2026 SCWD and JRWSS Annual Water Quality Reports (for reporting period January-December 2025), as described in the response to Finding F8 below.

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

Finding F6: SCWD Agrees

SCWD agrees. All water delivered to SCWD customers meets or exceeds the standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the SWRCB Division of Drinking Water, including all applicable PFAS Maximum Contaminant Levels and notification levels. SCWD's 2026 Annual Water Quality Report documents no MCL violations across any water source.

With respect to PFAS specifically: the GRF uses reverse osmosis, which is recognized as the most effective available technology for PFAS removal.

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 Orange County water retailers' annual water quality reports in 2025.*

Finding F8: SCWD Partially Agrees

SCWD partially agrees with Finding F8. SCWD's Annual Water Quality Reports have included a dedicated PFAS Advisory section in both the 2025 CCR (covering the reporting period January-December 2024) and the 2026 CCR (covering the reporting period January-December 2025) for both the SCWD and JRWSS service areas. SCWD was therefore among the water retailers that included a PFAS advisory in the 2025 Consumer Confidence Reports reviewed by the Grand Jury.

SCWD acknowledges that the current PFAS advisory sections in its CCRs are general in nature and do not yet include SCWD-specific monitoring results, a description of the District's PFAS treatment capabilities, or compliance status relative to current MCLs. SCWD is committed to enhancing this content in future reporting cycles, as described in the response to Recommendation R4 below. SCWD further agrees that coordinated, accessible public education on PFAS is important to maintain community trust and will expand its outreach efforts as described in the response to Recommendation R5.

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 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.*

Recommendation R4: Partially Implemented; Will Be Fully Implemented by July 1, 2029

This recommendation has been partially implemented. SCWD's 2026 Annual Water Quality Reports for both the SCWD and JRWSS include a PFAS Advisory section

addressing the nature of PFAS compounds, applicable regulatory actions, and links to external resources. SCWD's CCR documents water quality test results for all sources, confirming no detections above applicable regulatory thresholds for any PFAS subject to MCLs or notification levels under state or federal requirements.

SCWD has conducted PFAS initial monitoring as required under applicable SWRCB general monitoring orders and the federal PFAS Rule. Previously acquired PFAS data collected on or after January 1, 2019, using approved methods is eligible to satisfy federal initial monitoring requirements under 40 CFR 141.902(b)(1)(vi). Formal compliance monitoring against federally established MCLs begins April 26, 2027.

To achieve full implementation by July 1, 2029, SCWD commits to the following enhancements:

- Future SCWD and JRWSS Annual Water Quality Reports will include enhanced PFAS advisory content specifically addressing SCWD's water sources, treatment technologies (including reverse osmosis at the GRF which consistently averages a 98.8% removal rate), PFAS monitoring results collected under applicable state and federal requirements, and compliance status relative to applicable EPA MCLs and SWRCB notification levels.
- SCWD will add PFAS water quality information to scwd.org/WaterQuality in clear, plain language accessible to the public. The page will describe SCWD's water sources and treatment approach, confirm that SCWD monitors for PFAS as required by applicable state and federal regulations, and direct customers to current PFAS regulatory information and data resources maintained by the SWRCB and EPA. Customers seeking specific SCWD monitoring results may contact the District's water quality staff directly. SCWD will not publish real-time or continuously updated monitoring data on its website, as this is neither required by applicable regulations nor within current operational capability.
- SCWD notes that the Doheny Ocean Desalination Project, currently in pre-construction with operations anticipated in 2030, will also employ reverse osmosis as its primary treatment process, providing an additional source of locally controlled, PFAS-effectively-treated drinking water for the region. SCWD's public education on Doheny will reinforce this connection.

SCWD does not operate PFAS treatment facilities of the type described in the report. The GRF's existing reverse osmosis treatment inherently addresses PFAS removal as part of its standard operation, and no additional PFAS-specific treatment infrastructure is needed or planned for existing SCWD sources.

Recommendation R5: By September 30, 2026, OCWD and all Orange County water retailers should enhance coordinated public education efforts to reassure customers about drinking water safety.

Recommendation R5: Will Be Implemented by September 30, 2026

SCWD has already taken meaningful steps toward this recommendation. Both the 2026 SCWD and JRWSS Annual Water Quality Reports include a PFAS Advisory section, and the District's July/August 2026 On Tap newsletter directed customers to those reports, specifically highlighting that customers can find information on how their water is treated and tested and how SCWD protects water quality from source to tap. The District's March/April 2026 On Tap newsletter also featured a customer article on microplastics using a structured question-and-answer format, demonstrating SCWD's capacity to communicate complex water quality topics in accessible terms. Building on this existing foundation, SCWD will complete the following actions by September 30, 2026:

- Distribute a dedicated customer communication on PFAS water quality to SCWD's full customer list prior to September 30, 2026. The communication will address what PFAS are, whether SCWD customers need to be concerned, how the GRF's reverse osmosis treatment addresses PFAS, monitoring context for SCWD's water sources as required by applicable state and federal regulations, and where customers can learn more.
- Add PFAS water quality information to scwd.org/WaterQuality in plain language accessible to the public. Consistent with the District's approach described in Recommendation R4, the page will describe SCWD's water sources and treatment approach, confirm that SCWD monitors for PFAS as required by applicable state and federal regulations, and direct customers to current PFAS regulatory information and data resources maintained by the SWRCB and EPA. Customers seeking specific monitoring results may contact the District's water quality staff directly.
- Coordinate with MWDOC on any countywide or regional PFAS public communications relevant to imported water supplies delivered to SCWD's service area, to ensure SCWD's messaging is consistent with regional agency communications.

SCWD further notes that its ongoing public education and engagement for the Doheny Ocean Desalination Project provides an existing and active platform through which the District communicates water quality, water supply, and treatment technology topics to the public. SCWD will incorporate PFAS-relevant messaging into Doheny public education where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

South Coast Water District takes water quality reporting and public communication very seriously. SCWD's water supply is safe and meets all applicable state and federal standards. The District is committed to making this information more accessible and

specific to customers in its service area and will implement the enhancements described in this response on the timelines committed above.

SCWD respectfully requests that this response be accepted as its timely submission pursuant to California Penal Code § 933.05.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Goldman", is written over the typed name.

Scott Goldman
Board President, South Coast Water District