

\$26 million boost for Riverside-Corona Feeder water project

10:00 PM PDT on Tuesday, March 31, 2009

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The Press-Enterprise

President Barack Obama this week signed a bill authorizing \$26 million for the design and construction of wells, pumps and pipelines that will help supply water to as many as 80,000 families in western Riverside County.

The entire cost of the project, known as the Riverside-Corona Feeder, is about \$200 million.

The feeder will allow the Western Municipal Water District to store water in groundwater basins in the San Bernardino and Chino areas during wet years and pump and deliver the water to retail and wholesale customers in years of drought or during a catastrophic loss of water supplies.

Western provides wholesale water to the cities of Corona, Norco and Riverside and several water agencies.

It also serves retail customers in southeastern Riverside and the unincorporated areas of El Sobrante, Eagle Valley, Temescal Creek, Woodcrest, Lake Mathews and March Air Reserve Base.

Western General Manager John Rossi called the feeder the highest-profile "drought-proofing" project in the Inland region.

The alternative to the project would be raising rates dramatically to force customers to conserve, or imposing water restrictions, or both, Rossi said.

Western still must raise rates over the coming years to pay for the project, he said, and is looking to partner with other agencies to spread the cost.

It will also continue to seek grants, Rossi said.

One reason the feeder is vital is that Western has seen its water supply from the Colorado River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta cut back severely in recent years, he said.

Western has been working on the project for more than five years.

It's likely the \$26 million will be parceled out over several years, he said.

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