



SAN GORGONIO PASS  
WATER AGENCY  
*A California State Water Project Contractor*

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## Innovative Funding Program Receives Inaugural Award for Enhancing Regional Partnerships

**BEAUMONT, CA (November 12, 2024)** — The California Association of Mutual Water Companies (CalMutuals) recently honored San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA) with the first-ever Jim Byerrum Small System Champion Award on September 30, 2024 for helping smaller water systems secure grants for costly infrastructure upgrades. This allowed many underserved communities to improve their water supply and reliability, which had a positive ripple effect throughout the entire Pass region.

Named after James “Jim” Byerrum, a founding member of CalMutuals and President Emeritus of California Domestic Water Company, the award acknowledges Byerrum’s legacy of extraordinary support for small water systems. SGPWA President Mickey Valdivia and General Manager Lance Eckhart accepted the award on behalf of the agency.

“For more than two years, we’ve helped several small suppliers achieve funding for critical system upgrades that otherwise would have been lost while strengthening our regional partnerships,” said SGPWA Board President Mickey Valdivia.

SGPWA launched its gap funding program in 2022, where it helped Cabazon Water District secure \$1.7 million in state-sponsored grants to facilitate critical infrastructure upgrades that improved water reliability for more than 2,270 residents. Without gap funding, smaller water suppliers must delay improvements or turn down grants completely as they lack the upfront capital to meet immediate financial obligations, such as paying contractors to begin a project.

Over the past two years, SGPWA’s gap funding program has successfully provided more than \$16 million in capital to help small water systems complete crucial projects that include pipeline improvement, well rehabilitation, and new water reservoir construction. Not only do these grants help underserved communities with infrastructure enhancements, but they also improve water conveyance and reliability for the entire San Gorgonio Pass region.

Through these strategic partnerships, SGPWA helped South Mesa Water Company secure funding to replace 26,000 feet of pipeline that will enable up to 1,500 acre-feet of water recharge for local communities. Additional funding was secured for High Valleys Water District to construct a new water line and conduct essential infrastructure upgrades to improve system performance.

“SGPWA’s groundbreaking gap funding program has provided more than just capital to many water providers,” said CalMutuals President Lisa Yamashita-Lopez. “It ensured disadvantaged communities throughout the San Gorgonio Pass region have access to a clean, reliable water source for years to come.”

In addition to the aforementioned award, SGPWA’s gap funding program was also recently recognized by the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) with its 2024 Excellence in Innovation Award.

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**About San Geronio Pass Water Agency**

Formed in 1961, SGPWA is a State Water Contractor that serves a 225-square-mile area of western Riverside County. The service area includes the cities of Calimesa, Beaumont, and Banning, and the communities of Cherry Valley, Cabazon, and the Banning Bench. In addition to importing State Water Project (SWP) water from Northern California to augment local groundwater sources, the Agency builds local system infrastructure, participates in water transfers, partners in statewide water projects and collaborates on regional water reliability and conservation efforts.