BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BETTY H. OLSON, PH.D CHARLEY WILSON
SAUNDRA F. JACOBS BILL LAWSON
ROGER FAUBEL JOHN J. SCHATZ
GENERAL MANAGER

Santa Margarita Water District

For Immediate Release

Contact: Michele Miller
Public Affairs Coordinator
949- 289-3931(cell)
Dan Ferons
Chief Engineer
949-279-4864 (cell)

Upper Oso Reservoir Experiencing Algae Bloom Due to Weather Changes; Nearby Residents May Smell an Odor Temporarily

Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif. (October 31, 2009) -- The recent cold weather spell has affected Santa Margarita Water District's Upper Oso Reservoir, located in the cities of Mission Viejo and Rancho Santa Margarita. An algae bloom has occurred in the reservoir and nearby residents may smell an odor in the area temporarily.

During the summer, the lake splits into two layers of water. The top layer is warmer during the summer and maintains adequate levels of oxygen, but at the expense of the bottom of the lake. The bottom of the lake has cooler water and stays isolated with low levels of oxygen.

During autumn, the upper layer of water gets cold, and eventually sinks to the bottom, raising the bottom water. This year the recent cold spell came with strong winds that mixed the water, suddenly creating conditions that caused an algae bloom which used up the oxygen and resulted in odors.

SMWD has added equipment in the lake to help return the oxygen levels to normal. As of today, the dissolved oxygen levels have started increasing. The District is sampling the water regularly and monitoring the health of the reservoir. In addition, extensive water and air testing has been done by SMWD and there are no health risks associated with the odor. The reservoir is expected to return to normal within the next several days. Nearby residents can find updated information on www.smwd.com.

About the Santa Margarita Water District
SMWD is Orange County's second-largest water district, serving more than 155,000 residents and businesses in Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, Coto de Caza, Las Flores, and inland southern Orange County, including the communities of Ladera Ranch and Talega. SMWD owns Upper Oso Reservoir, one of the largest recycled water reservoirs in Orange County. The reservoir holds 1.3 billion gallons of recycled water thus conserving over a billion gallons of drinking water each year.

###