

Santa Margarita Water District



Upper Chiquita Reservoir Fact Sheet

A Safe and Sensible Solution to Regional Water Planning

The Santa Margarita Water District imports its domestic water supply and is committed to its customers to plan and develop water infrastructure facilities to protect and enhance local supply reliability.

In response to this commitment, SMWD is proposing to construct the Upper Chiquita Reservoir to provide the region with substantial new water reserves to meet customer demand during disruptions of water deliveries to the District. These interruptions can be unanticipated, like the break of the District's primary supply pipeline in 1999, or planned, like the recent shutdown of the Diemer Filtration plant in Yorba Linda.



The proposed Upper Chiquita Reservoir is located on the western slope of Chiquita Canyon, just north of Oso Parkway in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita.

Reservoir Facts & Figures

- Storage capacity of approximately 244 million gallons of domestic water (750 acre-feet)
- Surface area of approximately 16 acres

- The first, large-scale emergency potable water reservoir built in decades in Orange County.
- A regional partnership between SMWD (lead agency), Moulton Niguel Water District, City of San Juan Capistrano, City of San Clemente and South Coast Water District

Reservoir Benefits

- Regional emergency water supply during planned or unplanned service disruptions
- Capable of providing upwards of 168,000 families with approximately 200 gallons of fresh water a day for one week
- Included in the South Orange County Natural Community Conservation Plan, which designates habitat conservation and species protection measures to ensure an environmentally sensitive design
- Reservoir will not be visible from homes in local neighborhoods, including Las Flores and Wagon Wheel
- Earthen embankment will significantly reduce any visual impacts while traveling west along Oso Parkway near Highway 241

Safety

- Reservoir design conforms to the rigorous standards set forth by the State of California
- Safety features, including piezometers (moisture sensors), will continually monitor water levels and test for irregularities

Reservoir Timing

- June 2009: Groundbreaking
- December 2010: Construction completion and Reservoir operational

About SMWD

The Santa Margarita Water District is Orange County's second-largest water district, serving a customer base of more than 155,000 residents and 2,000 businesses in Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, Coto de Caza, Las Flores and inland southern Orange County, including Ladera Ranch and Talega.

Your Questions Answered

Is the reservoir safe to build?

Yes. The reservoir will include many safety features, including moisture sensors and an impermeable cover and liner which both preserves the water quality and reduces the risks of catastrophic failure by virtually eliminating seepage. Additionally, the reservoir will be constructed to the rigorous standards set forth by the State of California, and the State inspectors will be present during construction to ensure that the facility is built to current standards.

Will the reservoir be viewable from my home?

No. The Upper Chiquita Reservoir is not viewable from local neighborhoods, including Las Flores and Wagon Wheel. The scenic view shed along Oso Parkway will also be protected as a result of the reservoir's earthen embankment design.

Are there any other locations where the reservoir could be built?

SMWD has studied numerous locations for the construction of emergency storage reservoirs. However, the Upper Chiquita Reservoir site's geography, geology and proximity to regional pipelines make it the safest and most viable location. And because its construction was anticipated in the South Orange County Natural Community Conservation Plan and coordinated with the Upper Chiquita Conservation Easement, it is environmentally sensitive.

Is the reservoir intended to serve future residential or commercial development?

The Upper Chiquita Reservoir is planned as an emergency supply storage facility, which means that it's not intended to serve any particular residential community or business area. Rather, it will be available to provide emergency water wherever it is needed within the District, or the other districts participating in its construction.

Is SMWD responsible for financing the entire reservoir?

No. SMWD has partnered other south Orange County water agencies to fund the design, construction and maintenance of the Upper Chiquita Reservoir.

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