

Millview County Water District – Redwood Valley County Water District –
The City of Ukiah

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LOCAL WATER DISTRICTS AND THE CITY OF UKIAH CREATE NEW
UKIAH VALLEY WATER AUTHORITY**

New joint powers authority will manage water throughout the Ukiah Valley

Ukiah, CA. February 23, 2024 — Millview County Water District, Redwood Valley County Water District, and the City of Ukiah took a series of votes this week to consolidate their water districts into a new joint powers authority. The Ukiah Valley Water Authority (UVWA) will provide more efficient and reliable water service throughout the region. Additionally, the agreement allows UVWA to potentially access millions in state grant funding to modernize water infrastructure throughout the Ukiah Valley, building new interties and upgrading pipelines where needed.

UVWA integrates the governance and water infrastructure of Millview County Water District and Redwood Valley County Water District with the City of Ukiah. This will provide access for residents and businesses within Millview and Redwood Valley to eventually have access to more reliable water supplies. The lack of water reliability has limited the local economy and imposed restrictions on residential development that is needed to meet housing demands. But with infrastructure modernization and increased coordination, UVWA will be able to move water from where it is available to where it is needed.

“Today’s vote marks a historic turning point for the Greater Ukiah Valley and sets the stage for a more resilient water future for the region. The creation of the Ukiah Valley Water Authority creates a foundation that we will build on – showing how strategic coordination will bring significant benefits for water users across the region,” said Ukiah City Council Member Douglas Crane.

As part of the consolidation effort, UVWA will be able to apply to the State Water Board for \$40-50 million to fund the new infrastructure – including pipelines and interties, storage tanks, booster stations, and two new wells – needed to connect the agencies. Competitive grants from the State Water Board are available through its “Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience” (SAFER) Program, which encourages the consolidation of rural and small water systems (those least likely to afford necessary upgrades) as part of its mission to provide every Californian with safe drinking water. Before now, Ukiah Valley residents were served by no less than 12 water agencies and two different JPAs, from which nearly 70 board members made decisions on water policy.

“The consolidation of our water districts into a single entity is a move into the future. Our district has struggled to reliably supply water to our customers and maintain our infrastructure. This is an exciting opportunity to modernize and upgrade our systems,” said Adam Gaska, board member for Redwood Valley County Water District. “We look forward to further collaboration with the other districts and the City of Ukiah to face the challenges of today’s water landscape and better secure water resources for the greater community.”

“By creating this new consolidated structure for regional water management, the Ukiah Valley is maximizing access to resources and better positioning our communities to make it through highly variable water supply years and to navigate the challenges of the state’s legal framework for water access. We can now seek funding to upgrade outdated water systems and stand up a new approach to governance that protects local interests in the near and long term,” said Jerry Cardoza, board member for the Millview County Water District. “This is a golden opportunity we can’t pass up. Ratepayers in the participating districts will benefit from a more resilient and coordinated system.”

Staff for the Ukiah Valley Water Authority will be City of Ukiah employees, and eventually water bills for all the consolidated districts will come from the City. UVWA will ensure transparency, oversight, and fair representation for all its members – it will be governed initially by a six-member Board of Directors, with each member agency sending two representatives to serve on the Board. The Ukiah Valley Water Authority is different than annexation to the City – any future annexation would be an entirely separate process and would require review and approval by Mendocino County LAFCO. The Ukiah Valley Water Authority is focused on integrating the water systems to increase efficiency, reliability, and sustainability.

“The Ukiah Valley Water Authority will add much-needed water resiliency to our entire community across industries. In the face of climate change and the resulting drastic swings we are experiencing in hydrology – drought one year, floods the next – consolidating our efforts and combining our shared resources is how we ensure our future success,” said Mendocino County Supervisor Glenn McGourty. “Given the changes we can anticipate with the Potter Valley Project, integrating and coordinating our resources for water in Mendocino County is imperative. The Ukiah Valley Water Authority achieves exactly that, and I expect to see great things come out of it for our entire community.”

“We have been working with the State Water Board on water management issues for the region – ensuring that rules adequately reflect the unique nature of the Russian River Watershed as well as the water rights and water infrastructures assets that serve the area,” said Sean White, Director of Sewer and Water for the City of Ukiah. “Through the UVWA, we are in a position to access new grant funding to help connect the systems physically – that will put our region in a stronger position to work together on maximizing responsible use of water resources and secure a bright future.”

The Ukiah Valley Water Authority will hold its first meeting on March 5, 2024.

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