

**Testimony of Larry Wilson
Elected Board Member
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Santa Clara County, California
Before the House Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
H.R. 1526**

**The Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Authorization Act of 2007
May 24, 2007**

Chair Napolitano, members of the Subcommittee, and staff, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this very important issue.

My name is Larry Wilson and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, one of the largest water agencies in Northern California.

I want to thank you for holding this hearing on H.R. 1526, the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Authorization Act of 2007 to fund recycled water projects in the San Francisco Bay Region in California.

I also want to thank Congressman George Miller for sponsoring this bill and Representatives Anna Eshoo, Mike Honda, Tom Lantos, Zoe Lofgren, Jerry McNerney, Pete Stark, and Ellen Tauscher for co-sponsoring this important water supply bill that will provide much needed additional water supplies to our region.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District is the comprehensive water resources management agency for Santa Clara County.

The District was originally created in 1929 to respond to water supply problems. Because agriculture was a booming industry, the Santa Clara Valley was nicknamed the “valley of heart’s delight.”

But the downside was that groundwater resources were depleted and causing land subsidence – the ground was literally sinking.

In response to the region’s water supply problems, the Water District was formed to conserve water in reservoirs during the wet season for later release into groundwater basins or for use as surface water when it was needed.

Since that time, our portfolio of responsibilities has grown and the District has been tasked with adding flood protection and stream stewardship to its mission.

However, our core business is still to provide a reliable water supply to over 1.8 million residents and protect them from flooding dangers that are present in our region.

This vital water-supply mission includes managing Santa Clara County’s significant groundwater basins in what is now known world-wide as the “heart of Silicon Valley.”

Last year, we used about 380,000 acre feet in Santa Clara County alone.

As you're likely aware, we're experiencing dry weather in California and global climate change is impacting our water supply. The Sierra Nevada snowpack – which provides about 50-percent of the Valley's water needs – is dismally low this year. In addition, the effects of global climate change are expected to have greater impacts in the future dramatically changing the precipitation, and types of precipitation, we receive each year.

These current and future challenges mean we are in dire need of water projects that are immune to droughts or climate changes. Since the supply of water is limited, we believe recycled water is a resource that will continue to become more important in the future.

We can only depend on local water supplies for about 50% of our water needs in a given year. The remainder we import from the Sierra Nevada through the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. The District receives both California Water Project and Federal Central Valley Project contract water.

Recycled water projects are important for us as well as for the rest of California and the Western States, because they provide a sustainable source of water and are the best alternatives to meet future demand.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District was one of 17 agencies that participated in the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program in the late 1990s and completed a Bay Area Recycled Water Master Plan in 1999. Since then, a number of recycled water projects have been built. Now, I am here asking you to recommend federal funding of this package of seven projects for The Bay Area – two of which are served by the Water District.

The South Santa Clara County Recycled Water Project is sponsored by my agency and the South County Regional Wastewater Authority which serves the Cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill in southern Santa Clara County.

This project will result in a yield of approximately 1,800 acre-feet of recycled water short term and 2,440 acre-feet of recycled water long-term. It includes building 7.6 miles of recycled water distribution pipes, a 3 million gallon recycled water storage tank, and a 6 million-gallon-per day pump station.

The customers for this project have already been identified and would be irrigation users such as parks, and industrial users for uses like cooling towers. Using recycled water will take these customers off groundwater wells, and leave the groundwater for drinking purposes. Currently, groundwater is the sole source of drinking water in south Santa Clara County. Having recycled water in this region will diversify our water supply management portfolio and also increase the reliability of our supplies.

The South Bay Advanced Recycled Water Treatment Facility is a joint project with my District and the City of San Jose. This project involves constructing a treatment plant that will purify approximately 6 to 8 million gallons of wastewater per day.

The plant will use state of the art technology which includes: microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light disinfection.

The end product will be very high quality recycled water. This project will allow for 2 to 5 billion gallons of high quality water to be used for many existing water uses in the Cities of San Jose, Santa Clara, and Milpitas, and for potential future environmental uses like augmenting stream flows. It is important to note that expanding recycled water uses here will allow the community to save drinking water.

Madame Chair we need water supply solutions now. My agency has continued partnerships with other regional agencies and cities to locally implement many recycled water projects.

However, we are now in critical need for additional support in order to make these new projects a reality. We welcome the expansion of our regional partnership with the Federal Government to implement these projects.

This program is critical in that it augments our limited freshwater supplies. The vitality of our region is pulsing at its still furious beat, and we don't want the lack of water supplies to bring this vital, nation-wide economic engine to a standstill.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District takes its role as water supply manager for the County very seriously. The District, the Cities and the local community, are all looking for water supply and water supply reliability solutions. Recycled water is just that solution. HR 1526 can be the tool that enables us to achieve this water supply and we very strongly urge your support for this legislation.

Thank you again, Madame Chair, for your time and consideration and I am here ready to answer any questions you may have.