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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grand Jury Weighs in on Oxnard's Water Recycling Efforts

"In the entire history of the world, those nations that have survived and continue to prosper have been the ones successful in providing a continuous and adequate water supply." ~ Arnold Toynbee

Will Ventura County have a "continuous and adequate water supply" moving into the future? The 2014-2015 Ventura County Grand Jury was concerned about the current drought and what impact it could have on the county's lifestyle and economy, especially as agriculture is the county's largest economic segment. The grand jury chose Ventura's most populous city, Oxnard, to examine how one municipality and its adjoining agricultural area are dealing with water issues. The grand jury investigated by conducting in-person interviews and studying published and online information.

With considerable foresight, Oxnard began looking into the water situation in the late 1990s. In May 2002, Oxnard released an advanced planning study known as the Groundwater Recovery Enhancement and Treatment Program or GREAT. A major component of GREAT was to build a state-of-the-art water-purification facility to further process water that has already been through the city's existing wastewater treatment plant. This additional processing would produce "tertiary water"—high-quality, recycled water for use in agriculture, industry, golf courses and parks. The first of four

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phases of the new facility was substantially completed in 2012 at a cost of approximately \$110 million. However, for the facility to operate effectively and be economically viable, more pipelines still need to be built to transport its water to potential customers.

In its report, the grand jury recommends that the Oxnard City Council pursue funding, including partnerships and grants, to complete the first two phases of the GREAT program. This will substantially increase Oxnard's water supply and make it price-competitive with current suppliers. This additional water supply can be sold to other parties and increase Oxnard's revenues.

The just-released report also considers countywide water management, pointing out that the County's water supply is managed by 76 different entities that have no legislative or regulatory authority over all water issues. It recommends that the Oxnard City Council collaborate closely with the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, which oversees the county's largest underground water source, the Fox Canyon Aquifer, and is responsible for producing the area's newly mandated groundwater sustainability plan. A joint effort could provide a more efficient and equitable process to distribute water countywide.

The complete report may be accessed at www.ventura.org/grand-jury; click on the Annual Reports tab and consult "Fiscal Year 2014-2015."

The grand jury is a civil investigatory panel of 19 citizens created to serve as a voice of the people and a conscience of the community. Jurors are not appointed by politicians but are independent volunteer citizens.

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