



Reclaimed Water: A Responsible Way To Conserve

You've probably seen the purple pipes, valves and signs proclaiming an area as being irrigated by reclaimed water. Don't be alarmed. This process has been conducted, safely, for over 50 years.

There are two water reclamation plants in San Diego County, the North City Water Reclamation Plant and the South Bay Water Reclamation Plant. These plants treat waste water to a level that is approved for irrigation and other non drinking purposes. These two plants are able to treat up to 45 million gallons of water a day. This process provides San Diego with a reliable, year round, locally controlled water resource

The reclamation process is closely monitored by State Health officials and water quality-controlled agencies and meets all the federal, state and local water quality standards.

According to strict standards set by Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations, Recycled water is safe for all human contact except drinking. It is being used in recreational lakes, sprinkler systems, dust suppression, cooling tower operations and food crop irrigation. Among the biggest users are Caltrans, UCSD, Qualcomm, Torrey Pines Golf course and the City of Poway.

Reclaimed water is less expensive than potable water and, in case of a drought, a more reliable water source.

Reclaimed water is clear, colorless, odorless and virtually indistinguishable from tap water. Beyond what our senses can perceive, recycled water does not contain any constituents that exceed federal or state drinking water standards.

Reclaimed water does contain higher levels of dissolved solids or salts but turf grass, the major crop using recycled water, is quite resistant to the higher salt content. Nitrogen and phosphorus are also found in reclaimed water and are quite beneficial to plant growth. With proper drainage, landscaping will thrive when irrigated with reclaimed water. Reclaimed water is only used in controlled areas so the higher salt content shouldn't come in contact to vehicles or buildings.

Anyone working with reclaimed water should be certified. This certification assures that the individual possesses the necessary expertise to safely manage the use of the water.

So, don't be distressed the next time you witness water spraying out of a purple sprinkler head. Feel assured that the county is doing its part in conserving a valuable resource while better preparing itself for a water related crisis.

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