

***JOINED AT THE HIP  
SISTER WATER DISTRICTS STAND SIDE BY SIDE***

This is a snapshot look at two northern San Diego County water districts that are studying a possible merger or joint operations as a way to save money and avoid duplication of services. The joined-at-the-hip agencies – Rainbow Municipal Water District and Fallbrook Public Utilities District – are similar in many ways but different in others. Both districts are near or split by Interstate 15 and are roughly 45 miles north of the city of San Diego and 17 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. They are crisscrossed by several creeks and roughly flanked by the Santa Margarita and San Luis Rey rivers.

These side-by-side comparisons explore some of other the similarities as well as the differences.

**Rainbow**, which encompasses 49,800 acres, was formed in December 1953 when several smaller service areas were cobbled together. Rainbow has a five-member, elected governing board and three appointed, volunteer committees that advise directors and staff on engineering, finance and communication matters. In 2011, the district had about 18,000 residents, 55 budgeted staff positions and expected to spend about \$31 million on maintenance and operations.

**FPUD**, which encompasses about 28,000 acres, was formed in 1922. It later grew when a sewer district and portions of De Luz were added. FPUD has a five-member, elected governing board and several committees that are made up various directors. In 2011, the district had about 35,000 residents, 68 budgeted staff positions and expected to spend about \$21 million on maintenance and operations. FPUD operates two solar collection facilities that reduce its electricity costs.

**RAINBOW'S water infrastructure:**

- Rainbow serves about 7,800 metered accounts that receive their entire supply from imported sources. Its customers consume an average of 17.8 million gallons per day. All of the district's domestic and agricultural supplies are treated by a Metropolitan Water District of Southern California facility at Lake Skinner northeast of Temecula.
- The district supplies water to its customers via 16 storage tanks and reservoirs, seven pump stations, more than 40 pressure reducing stations and approximately 320 miles of pipes that range from 4 inches to 42 inches in diameter.

**RAINBOW'S sewer infrastructure:**

- The district provides sewage collection service to more than 2,260 customers. Rainbow does not have a treatment plant of its own. Instead it relies on the Oceanside Wastewater Treatment Plant for sewage disposal.
- Sewage flows through 56 miles of Rainbow collector pipes that link to a 10.5-mile main line that passes waste onto the Oceanside plant.

**FPUD'S water infrastructure:**

- The district serves about 9,100 metered accounts that receive their water supply from imported sources and one groundwater well. FPUD also produces reclaimed water and has access to Santa Margarita River supplies. Its customers consume an average of 19.5 million gallons per day.
- The district supplies water to its customers via one uncovered reservoir and, after this year, a total of nine storage tanks. It operates four pump stations, 18 pressure reducing stations and approximately 270 miles of pipes that range from 2 inches to 30 inches in diameter.

**FPUD'S sewer infrastructure:**

- The district provides sewage collection service to more than 5,000 customers. FPUD treats its own sewage. It operates 78 miles of sewage collector pipes.

**RAINBOW  
MUNICIPAL  
WATER  
DISTRICT**

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**2013  
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**HIGH PRESSURE AREAS**

Due to the hilly topography of the District, many portions of our service area are subject to high water pressure. So what can consumers do to protect their water system?

The California Plumbing Code requires pressure regulators on water supply inlets to homes and buildings wherever local static water pressure is in excess of eighty (80) pounds per square inch. Your house may already have a pressure regulator to protect against high pressure, but they are usually located where your pipe enters the building.

What about the water line from the meter to your home? Usually the line from the meter to the house remains unprotected. Some areas have District-installed and owned pressure regulators that are in front of the meter. ***Those devices are only installed to protect the District's meter from high pressure, not your water line.*** If you want to protect your line from high pressure coming into your property we highly recommend that you install a pressure regulator right after the meter.

If you have any questions about pressure please contact Customer Service at 728-1178.

**WATER QUALITY FLUSHING**

Health department requirements mandate that we flush out our water mains from time to time, and our maintenance crews are beginning to work through our system this month. Accordingly, you may see Rainbow crews letting a lot of water flow out of hydrants.

Flushing water lines help to remove sediment and that allows the disinfectant to do a better job of protecting water quality. In these times of water shortage we understand that customers are concerned when they see large volumes of water running down the street—and we don't like it either—but rest assured this maintenance practice is vital to the proper operation of our system. If we don't flush the lines and contamination of the system occurs we would have to use many times more water to flush the system than we would use if we do it proactively.

**"FLUSHABLE" PRODUCTS ARE A DRAIN ON MANPOWER**

Pardon the pun, but these tremendously popular so-called "flushable" products are the bane of sewer system operators nationwide. Collection system workers must defer preventive maintenance while they unplug sewer lines and pumps blocked with the non-biodegradable products. Homeowners sometime plug their own sewer laterals with the wipes and must incur the cost of hiring a plumber to clear the blockage, and there is the additional concern of causing sewage to back up into the customer's home.

Normal toilet paper is designed to break down almost as soon as it hits the water and it has little effect on the sewer transmission or treatment process; flushable wipes do not. They enter the sewer system and combine with other flushable products to create large wads of rags that plug pumps and pipes. If a sewer spill results the District could face significant fines, and ultimately those fines are paid by our ratepayers.

So while the flushable products may leave you feeling "shower fresh" they don't belong in the sewer system. Ironically, since they won't break down they cannot be treated at the sewage treatment plant and are removed and hauled to a landfill. Skip the middleman and dispose of these products in your household garbage.