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**FOR RELEASE**

**Helix Water District invited to apply for $15.8M WIFIA loan**

12/3/2021 - Today, Helix Water District was invited by the US Environmental Protection Agency to apply for a $15.8 million low-interest loan to help finance major water infrastructure upgrades in East County.

The Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan will help the district pay for over $32 million worth of needed capital improvement projects and facility upgrades. The projects improve water reliability, quality and increase energy efficiency throughout the district’s 50 square mile service area.

A low-interest loan offers flexibility by allowing the district to tackle larger capital improvement projects while also keeping other projects on schedule. Financing the district’s upcoming projects also benefits customers by providing rate stability.

Capital improvement projects include replacing 20,000 linear feet of aging cast-iron pipe with PVC to reduce unplanned water outages and expensive emergency repairs. The district also plans to upgrade its 50-year-old Johnstown Pump station, which provides water to the district’s R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeside. The new station will improve reliability and energy efficiency.

Additional projects are in preparation for East County Advanced Water Purification, a potable water reuse project that will create a local, drought-proof drinking water supply for East County. Funding will be used to modernize critical facilities including the district’s Chet Harritt Pump Station and the inlet/outlet tower piping at Lake Jennings before East County AWP goes online in 2025. Lake Jennings also will see improvements for water quality and monitoring, including adding aeration, installing on-site water quality monitoring facilities, a stormwater inflow retention system and providing backup generators for the lake.

“At Helix, we’re always planning ahead,” said Helix Water District Board President Joel Scalzitti. “This WIFIA loan will help us modernize our current infrastructure and ensure our future generations have access to safe and reliable drinking water. We are honored that our projects were selected for the EPA’s application process.”

The US EPA’s Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation loan provides selected borrowers with innovative financing tools to address pressing public health and environmental challenges in their communities. Helix is one of 43 projects in 24 states that the EPA invited to apply or waitlisted for $6.7 billion in available WIFIA loans. Upon approval, the low-interest WIFIA loan will cover half of the district’s $32 million in infrastructure upgrades.

Helix Water District is a not-for-profit local government agency that provides water treatment and distribution for 277,000 people in the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa and Lemon Grove, the community of Spring Valley and areas of Lakeside — east of downtown San Diego. Helix also provides treated water to neighboring Padre Dam, Otay and Lakeside water districts.

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