

Recycling system flowing as planned

By: **KAMALA KELKAR**
Examiner Staff Writer
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Redwood City Public Works Services Superintendent Justin Ezell shows off the purple pipes that deliver recycled water to businesses and homes. (Mike Koozmin/Special to The Examiner)

Instead of using millions of gallons of drinkable water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir for lawns and irrigation in Redwood City, commercial buildings and housing associations are reusing partially treated wastewater.

The first phase of the Redwood City Recycled Water Project is wrapping up after about five years. It cost about \$70 million and resulted in more than 15 miles of bright-purple pipes for about 50 sites.

So far, the money has paid for retrofitting facilities on the northeast side of U.S. Highway 101 in the Redwood Shores and the Seaport areas.

But now that a treatment facility at the South Bayside System Authority has been built to store and reuse some of the wastewater that has been chlorinated and filtered instead of poured into the Bay, phase two — putting pipes in the rest of Redwood City — should be less expensive and easier.

“The big expense was the treatment portion and the distribution. It’s the backbone,” Public Works Services Superintendent Justin Ezell said. “Rough

estimates of phase two, which we haven't planned yet, would cost about \$30 million."

In 2008, Redwood City resolved that all new commercial, industrial and housing developments would be required to have a pipeline into the recycled-water system. Playgrounds and schools were exempted because people have questioned the safety of the water.

"But it's basically one step away from drinking water," Ezell said.

Redwood City has reused about 170 million gallons of water since it started constructing the new system in 2004, which is more than halfway to its goal of using 300 million gallons by the end of the year.

Right now, 37 sites benefiting from the first phase are operating with the new system, and project coordinators are still reviewing about 17 more.

"I predict we'll be finishing those this year," water program spokesman Mark Millan said. "The most expensive part is finished, but we still have a long way to go."

Read more at the San Francisco Examiner: <http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/Recycling-system-flowing-as-planned-87295797.html#ixzz0oy5UksJ2>