

Federal government earmarks \$9 million for Bay Area drought-relief projects

By [Simon Read](#)
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Antioch, Pittsburg and other Bay Area cities pursuing the development of new water sources stand to benefit from \$9 million in federal funds earmarked last week for drought-relief projects.

Last month, President Bush signed a bill allowing local water and wastewater agencies to work jointly with the federal government to construct pipelines and treatment facilities to develop and expand the use of recycled water in the Bay Area. The bill was authored by Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez.

Miller — in a released statement — said the funding represented "a giant step for water recycling."

"At a time of severe and likely long-term drought, this federal assistance for recycled water projects is critical to help California move to a modern water future," he said.

Antioch is working with the Delta Diablo Sanitation District to build four miles of distribution piping that will feed recycled water to Lone Tree Golf Course and seven city parks. Officials hope the project will be completed by fall 2009 or spring 2010.

The project's estimated cost, according to Delta Diablo, is \$9 million.

Antioch City Councilman Arne Simonsen said the earmarking of federal funds will help push the city's water projects forward.

"Depending on when the money comes in, this will help prevent the depletion of our water enterprise reserve funds, which means we won't have to go out and ask for higher water rates," Simonsen said.

Pittsburg is seeking funding for several miles of pipeline that will allow the city to maintain Delta View Golf Course — and a number of municipal parks — with recycled water rather than drinking water. The pipeline, officials said, should be complete by early August.

Until the federal appropriations come through, the Delta Diablo Sanitation District has agreed to pay the federal portion of the \$5.4 million cost as long as Pittsburg repays the district.

Reusing treated water helps to preserve the region's river and groundwater supplies, officials said. In addition, treating and reusing wastewater allows urban water systems to improve the overall security and reliability of their water supply.

"It's absolutely great," said Pittsburg Vice Mayor Nancy Parent, referring to the federal funds. "This is drought business. Why would you want to use drinkable water to water parks, medians and golf courses?"

The funding could also benefit projects in Palo Alto, Mountain View, Pacifica, Redwood City, San Jose and South Santa Clara County.

Simon Read covers Antioch. Reach him at 925-779-7166, or sread@bayareanewsgroup.com.