Salinas Valley Basin
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 7, 2022

Contact:
Donna Meyers, General Manager
Phone: (831) 471-7512 x203
Email: meyersd@svbgsa.org

Local Youth Tap Into Groundwater Sustainability Science Through Field Trip Program

Everett Alvarez High School students engage with scientists to learn about groundwater and how to protect this vital resource for the future

CASTROVILLE, Calif. — In the bright midday sun, 16 Everett Alvarez High School students spill off a yellow school bus at the Silvio Bernardi Water Treatment Plant. It's the teenagers' first field trip since elementary school, and also the first school field trip the staff at Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency has hosted since SVBGSA formed five years ago.

Predictably, the kids are quiet and the adults verbose. But everyone is excited to be out for this three-hour, two-stop exploration of where the Salinas Valley's water comes from and what is being done to ensure the resource is sustainable for the next generation.

Ninth graders at Everett Alvarez are taking Next Generation Science 1 this year and, as part of the coursework, they chose to attend a field trip that links to what they are learning in class.

"Hopefully this brings science alive for them, and helps them engage and ask their own questions," said Robin Mendenhall, District Science Curriculum Specialist for Salinas Union High School District. "It gives them some agency for future studies."

For SVBGSA and the partners who helped facilitate the field trip — the water department staff from Castroville Community Services and Central Coast Wetlands Group — the field trip allows them to connect with youth and help them become more knowledgeable about water as a precious resource.

"The work that goes on to ensure the community has access to safe, reliable water, is immense and often unseen," said Donna Meyers, general manager for the SVBGSA. "Most of us just think about water coming out of the tap. But where did it come from?"

At the water treatment plant, staff walk students past an unassuming well, down to the treatment and filtering system. There, kids take turns touching the outflow pipe from Well 5, which draws from the Deep Aquifer about 1,400 feet below where they are standing. Water comes out of this prehistoric formation at 99 degrees Fahrenheit and the metal casing is warm to the touch.

"The things they will remember are field trips and when they were out at a well talking to a scientist," Mendenhall said.

After watching a 12-minute filter flushing process, the kids are back on the bus and headed for a demonstration wetland project at the Moro Cojo Slough near Moss Landing. There, ecologist Jenny Balmagia explains the natural filtration process wetlands provide for agricultural runoff. The pilot program has been successful in cleaning the water before it goes into the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, but more work is needed to determine the best locations for wetland restoration projects that could also benefit from water percolating down into the groundwater aquifers.

“There’s a lot of experimentation ahead for us as groundwater managers,” Meyers said.

About the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency was created in 2017. The SVBGSA was formed to develop comprehensive groundwater sustainability plans and implement the plans to achieve groundwater sustainability by 2042. The Agency’s 11-member Board is comprised of stakeholders who represent diverse interests from across the Salinas Valley. Learn more at www.svbgsa.org and on Facebook and Instagram.

About the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
The California State Legislature passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014 in response to a scientific understanding that groundwater in California is being used faster than it’s being replenished. The act requires designated groundwater basins to form a public agency to develop a groundwater management plan and implement actions that will help local subbasins reach or maintain groundwater sustainability.

###