

Recycled water may ease Calif. drought worries

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

At two treatment plants in El Dorado Hills, millions of gallons of brown wastewater pour in every week, and millions of gallons of clean water pour out through purple pipes that irrigate the lawns of 4,000 homes.

Proponents call it water recycling. Critics call it “toilet-to-tap.” But as the drought has taken hold in California, opposition to the idea has been drying up, and recycled water is winning acceptance. It’s expected to be a significant source of landscaping and drinking water for many Californians in years to come.

Today, taxpayer money is flowing toward recycled water programs. As part of recent drought relief measures, the state allocated \$200 million in grants to jump-start those efforts and slashed interest rates on \$800 million more in loans.

In October, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill that requires state health and water officials to report by September 2016 on the feasibility of developing uniform standards for recycling wastewater for “direct potable reuse.” That means purified wastewater would flow straight to household faucets.

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