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## **Purple pipes mean green come spring**

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**Construction: Coming to Your Neighborhood.**

Nearly 6,000 valley residents will receive that message on bright yellow and purple postcards this month, as the local recycled water authority is finally laying the pipe that will deliver treated and repurified water to ball fields, golf courses and school yards in parts of Blackhawk, Dublin, Danville and San Ramon.

The pitch is an education campaign to introduce the San Ramon Valley Recycled Water program.

The project is a joint effort of the Dublin San Ramon Services District and the East Bay Municipal Utility District, operating as the DSRSD-EBMUD Recycled Water Authority, or DERWA.

Seven years after the environmental review was certified, DERWA is building the infrastructure for the recycled water program, including two reservoir tanks, two pump stations and 16 miles of purple transmission pipes.

Between now and early 2005, there will surely be some detours and delays, but project promoters say the inconveniences of construction are well worth it.

Recycled water "reduces the amount of potable water required for these nondrinking uses, ensuring that the best and purest sources of water will be reserved for the highest use: drinking water," one program pamphlet said.

During a drought, reclaimed water also can be used to prevent landscaping from dying when strict water regulations prohibit the use of potable water on lawns and fields.

In the future, recycled water also could be used to fight fires, flush toilets and control dust on construction sites.

**Many residents have not heard that message.**

Local utility officials have hosted five community education meetings and received paltry attendance for their efforts.

"We average one member of the community at each meeting," said authority manager Robert Baker.

"We have gotten almost no questions about safety," Baker said, adding that the authority has received only a handful of correspondence about the project.

According to DERWA, more than 4,800 California sites use recycled water, and it has never been linked to a health problem.

Recycled water is "highly treated" waste water that is reserved for a limited number of uses. The cleaning process includes odor control, grit removal, filtration and ultraviolet radiation to destroy bacteria, viruses and other pathogens.

"We say recycled water is not drinkable, but it's gulpable. If you get a gulp of it in your mouth, it won't hurt you" Baker said.

San Jose and the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, which serves Concord and Pacheco, have operated recycled water programs for years.

Recycled water will not be available in individual homes. The authority's customers are cities, school districts and homeowners associations that irrigate large tracts of landscape.

If not recycled, treated waste water is typically discharged into the San Francisco Bay.

"Treated waste water has certain amounts of metal in it that could be a potential long-term detriment to the Bay. But those micronutrients can be a benefit for landscaping" as well as an environmental boon to the Bay, Baker said.

For more information on the DERWA construction schedule or the San Ramon Recycled Water program, visit [www.derwa.org](http://www.derwa.org).

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