How Safe is Your Water?

After being transported hundreds of miles, guarded, treated and repeatedly tested, the Vallecitos water delivered to your home or business tap is of a high quality, and if you hear anything different, consider the source.

Unlike other areas in the United States that get their water from ground sources that are susceptible to contamination from urban runoff and illegal dumping, your water starts off as Sierra Nevada and Colorado snowmelt that is navigated securely through aqueducts and verified safe by certified technicians before meeting the needs of the 94,000 residents within the Vallecitos service area.

Several agencies – the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Health Services, and wholesalers Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and San Diego County Water Authority – monitor your water physically through regular surveillance and chemically through tests administered during its journey.

In the end, all organizations, including Vallecitos staff, conduct thousands of water quality tests annually. The conclusion: your water either met, or in most cases, exceeded stringent regulatory standards.

However, does this mean your water is 100 percent contaminant free? As water is a universal solvent that attracts and dissolves everything it comes in contact with, the answer is no.

But with safety as the ultimate goal, Vallecitos closely adheres to EPA-set maximum contaminant levels, which are so miniscule, they receive a one drop in parts per million or one drop in parts per billion measurement. This is accomplished with cutting-edge technology that could detect a trace of a contaminant in a tank the size of Pasadena’s Rose Bowl.

From time to time, there are reports of violations in drinking water; however, this is more common in smaller agencies around the country with few resources and non-certified staff.

Vallecitos Water District, with an operations staff boasting one of the highest numbers of certifications in the region, is constantly testing and treating water and looking for new ways to improve water quality and service for its customers.

The end result is a technologically advanced, filtered final product meticulously cleaned to meet and often exceed established EPA standards that can still, in this modern age, be purchased for pennies.

For more information on water quality test results, go to the District’s Water Quality Report Section of its web site at www.vwd.org.
Instead of simply being served up as the ultimate sacrifice for our sustenance, fish are now being used to fulfill a more sustainable purpose that not only supplies us food, but saves valuable water too.

Aquaponics, a technology combining fish with agriculture, has been gaining acceptance as an alternate organic food production and irrigation system that uses a small amount of water, and eliminates chemical fertilizers and the weeding associated with producing crops the traditional way.

Although it may sound similar to hydroponics, aquaponics is entirely different. Hydroponics is the art of growing plants without soil. Aquaponics, is a combination of hydroponics with aquaculture, otherwise known as fish farming. This symbiotic relationship enables the plants to be fertilized with natural fish waste, thus creating 100 percent organic food.

Anyone who has ever had an aquarium knows that fish waste accumulates over time and can become toxic to the fish. Periodic water changes are necessary to prevent the fish from dying. However, in an aquaponics system, no water changes are needed. The naturally occurring bacteria in the aquarium convert the fish waste (ammonia) into nitrates (nitrogen), which is then absorbed by the plant roots as fertilizer. The plants remove up to 97 percent of the nitrogen from the water, and then the purified water is recycled back to the fish in a closed-loop system.

The cycle is automatically repeated many times throughout the day, providing the fish with fresh water, plants with essential food, and above all, saving water during the entire process. Water is only added to replace loss from transpiration of plants and minor evaporation from the air. As there is no soil to dry out, aquaponic farming and gardening uses up to 90 percent less water than conventional methods.

Commercial Greenhouse Aquaponics yields greater crop production to growers along with the added benefit of having fresh fish, such as tilapia or salmon, as an additional crop. Home gardeners are also enjoying aquaponics by connecting their greenhouse and vegetable beds to their aquariums or koi ponds so that they can grow their own 100 percent natural food.

Come to the Vallecitos Water District lobby and see the aquaponics display, which was donated by San Marcos-based Grow Foods, Inc.

Even better, Vallecitos will be hosting a special workshop on November 3rd from 5 – 7 p.m. that will feature an overview of this technology delivered by Grow Foods, Inc. The workshop will also feature a presentation by Dr. Gary Bender, a farm advisor for the University of California Davis Cooperative Extension, who will discuss the results of their recent research to find alternatives to growing high water use crops, such as avocados.

Reservations are required. If you are interested in attending, please contact the Vallecitos Conservation Department at (760) 744-0460 or email twebb@vwd.org.
Local Students Sketch to Conservation in 2011 ‘Water Is Life’ Poster Contest

Every year, the Vallecitos Water District and the North County Water Agencies sponsor a water awareness poster contest, giving fourth graders in our region the opportunity to artistically demonstrate their wise-water-use knowledge.

This year, Vallecitos had over 120 water-conscious students enter the 2011 contest with the theme: “Water Is Life”. Vallecitos selected its top three drawings to represent the District in the North County Water Agency 2012 calendar.

Congratulations to first place winner Alondra Guereca from San Marcos Elementary School, second place winner Tim King from Discovery Elementary School and third place winner Gigi Downey from Richland Elementary School.

Vallecitos Businesses Earn Gold to Show They Care About the Environment

Vallecitos Water District customers Hollandia Dairy, Hughes Circuits and Metal Etch Services, all based in San Marcos, were recently given recognition for achieving perfect environmental compliance for their industrial wastewater discharges in 2010, earning a prestigious Gold Award from the Encina Wastewater Authority.

With the goal of 100 percent compliance, Gold Award recipients must pass an inspection and six wastewater tests annually. They also must submit two semi-annual reports demonstrating compliance with their wastewater discharge permit.

These actions work to protect the ocean where their treated wastewater is released and prevent wastewater treatment plant operator injury, which can be caused if toxic substances are discharged down the drain.

The Encina Wastewater Authority, located in Carlsbad, presents the awards annually. The facility is jointly owned by Vallecitos Water District and five other local agencies, and is responsible for treating approximately twenty-two million gallons a day of wastewater generated in north San Diego County.
Get to Know Your Water Savings by
Getting to Know Your Controller

You know how to operate the heater, stove, and faucets in your home. Now get better acquainted to the gadget responsible for 50 to 80 percent of the water usage at homes within the Vallecitos Water District – the irrigation controller.

Controllers come in all shapes and sizes. Although most are found in the garage, they can be located anywhere on your property. By becoming more familiar with your unit, it’s possible to save thousands of gallons of water. Here are some of the basics.

**Controller Features:**

**Stations** control the valves that release the water to the irrigation zones in your yard. Place plants with similar watering needs in the same location for the most efficient watering.

**Start Time** is the designated time that a specific valve will open to irrigate a station or zone.

The **Run Time** or **Station Duration** is the time - in minutes - a specific valve will stay open to water a zone.

**Off** or **Stop** will stop programs from running until you toggle back to **Run**.

The **Manual** button allows you to run a single valve for the amount of time you select. This is ideal for tuning up your system and checking for leaks or misaligned or clogged sprinkler heads.

A **Program** is where you store all of your settings. It consists of a set of programs (A, B, or C) that you can run different valves on different days.