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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Helix Water District Suspends Late Fees and Shutoffs to Support Customers during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

At their March 18, 2020 meeting, Helix Water District's Board of Directors voted to temporarily suspend late fees and water shutoffs for nonpayment in an effort to support its customers facing financial challenges during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"We recognize that many of our customers are facing financial hardships as a result of the pandemic and the related school and business closures," said Helix Water District Board President Mark Gracyk. "We want to help by making sure that all of our customers have access to safe, clean water during this public health emergency. As we all know, handwashing is one of the best ways to limit the spread of the virus."

The district's temporary suspension of late fees and shutoffs for nonpayment is effective March 19 through April 30. The board will reassess whether to extend those dates in April.

District staff will continue to read meters and generate water bills during this time, and outstanding balances for accounts that run past the disconnection date will be due once the temporary suspension expires. The district encourages customers to continue to pay their bills on time but wanted to take this extraordinary measure to support those customers who are experiencing financial stress due to impacts of the pandemic.

Customers who are experiencing difficulties paying their water bills are encouraged to contact the district's customer service team at 619-466-0585 to make payment arrangements.

"Our water supply is safe," said Helix Water District Director of Water Quality Brian Olney. "There is no evidence that the virus is transmitted through treated water. Our water treatment process includes disinfecting the water with ozone to chemically deactivate and physically remove viruses, bacteria and other organisms."

### **Board of Directors**

Mark Gracyk, President  
DeAna R. Verbeke, Vice President  
Daniel H. McMillan, Division 1  
Kathleen Coates Hedberg, Division 4  
Joel A. Scalzitti, Division 5

To ensure continuity of water delivery, the district has enacted its Emergency Operations Plan and has worked with its vendors to prioritize the delivery of vital supplies. Staff critical to operations and maintenance will continue to report to work, with rotations and social distancing measures in place. Noncritical staff will telecommute to minimize the potential for virus transmissions.

Additionally, all nonessential district construction work that would require water shutoffs has been temporarily suspended.

District facilities are closed to the public until further notice to protect both staff and customers. Customer service remains available by phone during business hours.

Further details are available on the district's website at <https://hwd.com/coronavirus-does-not-impact-your-tap-water/>.

*Helix Water District provides water treatment and distribution for 277,000 people in the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa and Lemon Grove, the community of Spring Valley and areas of Lakeside -- east of downtown San Diego. Helix also provides treated water to neighboring Padre Dam, Otay and Lakeside water districts.*

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