



CITY OF VENTURA  
**NEWS RELEASE**

501 Poli Street  
Ventura, CA 93001

**For Immediate Release**

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**Local Youth Learn the Value of Water  
through Ventura Water Award Winning Program**

Ventura Water was awarded the statewide winner of the Community Engagement and Outreach Project of the Year by the California Water Environment Association (CWEA) for educating local youth about water sustainability. The winning program is collaboration with the MERITO® Foundation, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to providing meaningful watershed experiences to multicultural youth.

The program has provided an opportunity for more than 500 local youth to learn about the value of water through hands-on water quality testing and field data collection at Ventura's wild life ponds. Additionally, Ventura Water hosted a water conservation challenge for participating elementary schools wherein students were tasked to develop a water conservation plan.

The MERITO® program strives to connect the classroom experience with field interaction for students to better understand the relationship of water treatment technologies and the role that it plays in preserving the environment. Since 2005, MERITO® has reached over 10 million people through ocean conservation outreach projects, immersed over 15,000 students on earth and ocean science and issues, and has raised the capacity of more than 300 teachers and 100 Marine Protected Areas practitioners in the areas of ocean science and resource protection.

"Students learn water quality sampling and testing techniques, how wastewater is treated and purified to near drinking water quality standards, and about future plans to implement a new potable reuse facility. It gives students a new appreciation for what most people take for granted," said Kevin Brown, Ventura Water General Manager.

Field trips to the Ventura Water Reclamation Facility helped students to explore a wide range of environmental issues and water infrastructure. "In this type of an atmosphere, students can establish connections between fresh water and ocean water, as well as ascertain the water conservation issues particular to their local watersheds. They also learn about stewardship and how water quality plays into the health and sustainability of our environment," said Rocio Lozano-Knowlton, Executive Director and Founder of MERITO® Foundation.

This release is available on the City of Ventura website at [www.cityofventura.ca.gov](http://www.cityofventura.ca.gov).###

