



MONTEREY REGIONAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

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SUMMARY OF MRWPCA ACTIVITIES

There has been a great deal of activity at the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA) in the last several months I want to provide a summary of that activity.

The draft EIR for the agency's Groundwater Replenishment Project (GWR) was released on April 22, and the Public Review period ended on June 5th. The agency received 27 comments covering topics such as water rights; the effect of the project on fisheries; water quality and safety; nutrients in the water; and how completion of this project would affect the Carmel River.

When built, the actual project will use wastewater from various sources including treated water, agricultural wash water, and runoff from farms and fields. We will take in just over 4,300 acre feet per year (afy) of these waters and produce 3,500 afy of potable water for use on the Peninsula. That water will be cleaned up to a standard higher than drinking water and injected into the aquifer for later use.

State law currently requires treated water to be in the ground for at least six months before it can be taken out and used, though once up and running Cal Am will be able to immediately take an equivalent amount from the aquifer because we will be replacing what they take out.

This production of 3,500 afy of water could replace a significant part of what will be cut as a result of the Cease and Desist Order (CDO), which calls for a reduction of almost 5,000 afy in 2017 (though there will be further reductions in future years). It can also be completed before the end of 2017, which is at least two years before the Cal Am desal plant is projected to be finished; and its completion will allow the construction of a smaller desal plant.

The Monterey Peninsula's target for all water is 15,296 afy, though the eventual shortfall will be 10,730 afy. Thus all of the water projects together – and what will be allowed for withdrawal from the Carmel River and Seaside Aquifer - are intended to supply only that amount. It is expected that this will be enough for current residential use, to provide owners of "lots of record" the ability to finally build their homes, and to have a little left over for a small amount of infill development

Once completed, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) will purchase the water from the MRWPCA at the point it is injected into the aquifer, and Cal Am will later purchase it from the MPWMD. This process has been endorsed by the California Department of Drinking Water, and a similar project has been working in Southern California for over 40 years (I have had that water to drink).

The project has been named Pure Water Monterey, and the MRWPCA works closely with the MPWMD on the project. In fact, the MPWMD finances a great deal of the expense for this project and the MRWPCA has also allocated \$450,000 to build a demonstration facility at its site north of Marina.

While we already had such a facility at one time, we were using leased equipment and can now use what we learned from operating that demonstration plant to put together our own operation. The facility has been painted, electrical and structural work is being finished, and we are waiting for equipment so that we can finish the facility and begin water production and tours in August.

The main water project will be an environmentally friendly project because it uses less energy than desal and does not create large amounts of brine that need to be discharged into the ocean. Cleaning up wastewater takes about 1/3 the energy of desal because that water is 85% potable, with only 15% brine, while seawater is more like 50/50.

This continues the MRWPCA's long record of sound environmental practices. In addition to working on a solar farm project with the city of Salinas, we are producing close to 90% of the power we need to operate the plant from generators which are supplied by the gas produced in our process.

At this point in time, the main hurdle to going ahead with the project is that the multiparty "source water" agreement between the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD), the City of Salinas, Marina Coast Water District, agricultural interests, and the agency is still under negotiation. The original Memo of Understanding (MOU) for discussing the use of those waters was signed in the fall of 2014. Though it had been hoped that the negotiations would be completed by now, we recently had to extend the negotiation period until September of this year.

That is because the negotiations for the source water need to be completed before the project can go forth, because without a guaranteed source of non-drinkable water for conversion to potable water it would not make sense to continue. If we cannot reach an agreement on source water, the Peninsula will have to rely on Cal Am to build a bigger and more expensive desal plant to provide all the water needed. This would require the company to build a 9.6 million gallon per day (MGD) desal plant rather than a 6.4 MGD plant if we succeed.

In another development, the former General Manager - Keith Israel – retired on June 19 of this year. Keith had started with the MRWPCA in September of 1988 and guided the agency through a lot of growth and development.

His replacement is Paul Sciuto, who came to us from the Tahoe Water District about eight months ago as our in-house Deputy General Manager. As a result, he was ready to take the reins upon Keith's retirement. Keith will stay on a part time consulting contract for at least six months, however, because there is so much going on at the agency that we want to make sure we

do not lose the ability to call him if and when needed to take advantage of his “historical memory”.

At the same time, the agency is searching for an Assistant General Manager, and has gotten several well qualified candidates. The actual recruiting period has just ended and we are in the interview stage. Final interviews are happening now and an offer should be extended by the end of July.

The MRWPCA has expressed some concern about Pacific Grove’s Local Water Project – not with the project itself, but with the density of the wastewater sent to the PCA’s nearby pump station from the City due to the retention of some water from the system. I will be happy to discuss this with anyone who wishes to do so.

One thing that has come up recently is the limited ability to shut off water to growers if they take more water than ordered. Currently, growers order the water they think they will need and the agency puts it into the system; though if one or more individual growers takes more than ordered we have no way to control that - and there is no way to impose disciplinary penalties. Since this could affect the amount of water available to other growers, however, it is an important issue for everyone. The PCA and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (which has many grower representatives) are working on that now.

The MRWPCA plant was constructed back in the late 1980’s and, operating in a rather harsh environment, finally needs some upgrading. Some piping is in poor condition, motors and pumps need to be replaced, and some controller panels need to be replaced for safety reasons. Because of this, the agency is looking to start on a five year \$35 million Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

The Agency recently held its budget workshop, and the Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget is \$23.4 million – up from \$22.7 million last year, and will include \$4.4 million for a Capital Improvement Program for 24 projects we have under way. Over the next five years, the Agency expects to work on 70 projects in total, with a cost of approximately \$40 million. These projects will include a thorough study of the condition of agency infrastructure and facilities. Additionally, the Agency will spend \$1 million on the two pump stations it controls within the Pacific Grove system.

For the next fiscal year the MRWPCA average residential base rate will increase 3.4% from \$14.85 to \$15.35. Even after this rate increase, however, the local rates compare favorably with areas such as Carmel (\$34.97), San Jose (\$33.75), Santa Cruz (\$44.20) and Las Palmas (\$130.00).

Anyone having questions should contact me. I will try to either answer or – if I don’t know the answer – get the information for you.

Respectfully Submitted

Rudy Fischer

Councilman Rudy Fischer