



Coalition still has questions about GWR

By Bob McKenzie

The Coalition of Peninsula Businesses has remaining questions concerning the recycled water project, also known as GWR or Pure Water Monterey, as part of the Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project. GWR's success so far- certified EIR, project approval-has led many to conclude that the smaller desalination plant will suffice for the rest of our water needs. But the Coalition has apprehensions regarding this claim.

While GWR has a lot of political support, the Coalition's questions remain. The Water Purchase Agreement recently signed by California American Water Co., Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency and Monterey Peninsula Water Management District specifies that Cal Am's allotment is to be 3,500 acre feet annually (AFA). Cal Am's agreement allows the two government entities to finance the construction of the project.

But that agreement also allows for a minimum of 2,800 AFA for two years and a one year drop to 1,800 AFA before the project could be considered a failure and Cal Am could be released from the agreement.

The sizing of the smaller desalination plant at 6,400 AFA is based on the receipt of 3,500 AFA a year, but the size of the desalination plant has not been changed to accommodate the potentially lower numbers in the Water Purchase Agreement.

So what happens if something goes wrong with GWR production and it drops to 2,800 AFA for two years and 1,800 AFA for one year? Will we be forced into water rationing?

After spending the greater part of a decade and millions of dollars to "fix" our water supply shortage, should not our community have a solution that guarantees a plentiful water supply for our future needs?

Sustainability is arguably the most serious problem with GWR, and sustainability of GWR has not been demonstrated. Lack of sustainability will lead to periodic water shortages, which will cause the inevitable regression to water rationing.

GWR has additional questions that have yet to be answered, such as lack of legal rights to some of the source water options, and extreme water quality issues with specific sources. Long term sustainability of the sources noted in the plan generated by the agriculture industry and weather conditions leave doubt for a truly sustainable future. Do we not deserve a guarantee; given the time and money we've spent on what was believed to be a major component of a long term water supply package?

The Coalition believes we deserve more. The Coalition will keep raising inquiries regarding the governmental agencies involved with GWR and will continue to promote the larger desalination plant that will supply us with a sustainable, adequate water supply for years to come.



The Coalition supports GWR as a standalone project with the larger desalination plant and aquifer storage. GWR with a smaller desalination plant allows for too many questions regarding a long term water solution for the Peninsula, to go unanswered. At this time GWR is critical, as it represents a solution to both our current water shortage, and the state mandated cutback requirements regarding Carmel River pumping. Concurrently, the submitted amended CDO needs approval by the state and that has yet to be granted. The hope is the progress with GWR will assist the state in accepting the amended CDO.