

## **MCHA spearheads new coalition to support the Regional Water Project, avoid CDO disaster**

By MCHA's Coalition of Peninsula Businesses water issues consultant Bob McKenzie

In May of this year, MCHA took the lead in creating a coalition of concerned residents and businesses to support the Regional Water Project (RWP) that was supported by MCHA and approved by the Public Utilities Commission. Co-chaired by Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa General Manager John Narigi and Cannery Row Company Executive Vice-president and Chief Operating Officer Mike Zimmerman, the new MCHA's Coalition of Peninsula Businesses is dedicated to

- 1) educating the public about the devastating effects that the 2009 Cease and Desist Order against California American Water will have on local businesses, local governments and residents,
- 2) supporting the Regional Water Project as the only PUC-approved and ordered water supply project that can be completed and delivering water on time to avoid the December 31, 2016 deadline set by the CDO, and
- 3) containing the costs of the Regional Water Project to the most equitable and affordable level possible.

MCHA is joined by six other broad-based community organizations, all representing hundreds of businesses and thousands of residents: Monterey Commercial Property Owners' Association; Monterey County Association of Realtors; Chambers of Commerce of Carmel, Monterey Peninsula, and Pacific Grove, and Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

The Coalition recently agreed to stay focused on its primary missions of education and support in spite of recent controversy surrounding the project. The nature of the water supply crisis we face and the nature of the project as the only viable water supply solution have not and will not change depending on the projects background.

One of the stark realities of the water supply cutbacks ordered by the CDO is that all of the Peninsula will face Stage 5 Water Rationing in 2014 or possibly 2013. Basically this means water rations for every resident and every business and Cal Am implementation of PUC-approved water rationing rates, which are approximately 38% higher than current rates.

To better understand the threat of the CDO and the realities of Stage 5 water rationing, please see the Coalition documents at the Coalition's website, < <http://www.mcha.net/home.htm>> and hit the link for the Water Coalition. The Coalition will post sound, factual information about our water supply issues on the website as they become available.

The first critical step in the timely completion of the RWP is the Coastal Commission hearing on the application to drill test slant wells. The hearing will take place at the Commission hearing in the Watsonville City Council chambers on Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>; it is the first hearing item on the agenda, so it will start at a little after 9am. The slant wells, if successful, will be an important source of supply of 100% seawater for the desal component of the RWP, thus avoiding controversy about water rights! The more supporters we have at the hearing, the better the chances the application will be approved. Staff is recommending approval and we need to make sure that the Commission follows its staffs' advice.

Please join with the Coalition and its members in supporting the timely completion of the Regional Water Project. It is our only chance of surviving!