

The Coalition of Peninsula Businesses continues to fight for the least-cost adequate water supply

By Bob McKenzie

In recent months, the Coalition of Peninsula Businesses has taken strong actions to assure the Peninsula communities get an adequate water supply on schedule - which means meeting the Cease and Desist Order milestone which is coming September 30, 2018.

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Recently, the Planning and Conservation League Foundation (PCLF) tried, no less than twice, to force the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to open what it calls a Phase 3 in its proceeding on Cal Am's proposed Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project (MPWSP). Phase 3 would very likely delay PUC the ongoing process and cause us to miss the September 30, 2018 CDO milestone which calls for certification of the project EIR/EIS and issuance of a CPCN (short for Certificate of Present and Future Public Convenience and Necessity - in other words, a PUC order to build the water supply project).

PCLF is joined by several groups who do not live on the Peninsula and a couple of local groups whose dislike of Cal Am is so intense that they would rather go on severe water rationing than see the Cal Am project completed.

Phase 3, in short, would be an examination by the PUC of the possibility of expanding the GWR/Pure Water Monterey water recycling project by at least 2,250 acre feet per year (afa) in addition to its 3,500 afa already included in the project as Phase 2.

The goal of the various groups supporting a Phase 3 is simple - keep our water supply restricted to a water poverty level that threatens the health, safety and welfare of all of us and eliminates the desal plant portion of the project.

The Coalition supports completion of a desal plant of sufficient size to supply our water needs day in and day out - which the other two legs of the three-legged stool water supply project cannot guarantee, period!

The Coalition filed, in April, a brief on the final EIR/EIS - finally release after numerous delays.

The EIR/EIS came to several very important conclusions:

- The desal project does **NOT** interfere with Marina's, Marina Coast Water District's, or anyone else's groundwater rights or access to water.
- The preferred project is a 6.4 million gallon per day (mgd) desal project combined with a 3,500 afa water recycling plant and expanded Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR).

The Coalition is pleased the long awaited EIR/EIS is comprehensive and thorough, but it argued with the conclusion that a 6.4 mgd deal plant is adequate and instead proposed PUC approval of the

originally proposed 9.6 mgd in a phased manner such that a 6.4 mgd plant could be constructed immediately and up to two 1.6 mgd modules (usually referred to as 'trains') could be added later as water demand dictates.

Two of the three 'legs' of the project are probably not reliable sources of water.

The GWR/Pure Water Monterey project is supposed to yield 3,500 afa - a major component of our overall water supply - but uncertainties about the sustainable availability of its source water bring into question its long-term reliability.

The other 'leg' is expanded ADR that is supposed to yield 1,300 afa, but recent experience shows that kind of supply is highly unlikely most years.

The Coalition will continue to work hard to make sure we realize, at long last, a reliable, sustainable, secure, stable and sufficient water supply.