



NEWS RELEASE

Date: November 15, 2010

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Santa Cruz Water Department and Soquel Creek Water District (scwd²) Announce Initiation of EIR and Public Scoping Meetings for the Proposed scwd² Regional Seawater Desalination Project

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (November 15, 2010) – The formal initiation of the environmental review phase for the City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District (**scwd**²) Regional Seawater Desalination Project begins today with the release of a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and announcement of public scoping meetings. The proposed project includes a 2.5 million gallon per day desalination facility in Santa Cruz to provide needed water supply during droughts, protect groundwater aquifers, and improve water supply reliability for Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District water users.

“The State of California is facing a water shortage crisis, and our coastal community is no different. Despite our customers’ commitment to conservation and lower overall water use, our local water supplies remain insufficient to get us through drought and enable us to substantially reduce pumping of our groundwater aquifers to avoid seawater intrusion. We need to develop a reliable supplemental water supply to meet current and long-term needs,” said Laura Brown, General Manager of Soquel Creek Water District.

The City of Santa Cruz (City) and Soquel Creek Water District (District) have both been evaluating a new supplemental water supply for more than 20 years. After exhaustive consideration of more than thirty different water supply projects through the City’s Integrated Water Plan (IWP) process and the District’s Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) process, the two agencies and their respective plans both identified seawater desalination as the best option for a new water source. Desalinated water, in conjunction with conservation and use restrictions during drought, would help provide a reliable and flexible water supply that would meet long-term needs while ensuring protection of public health and safety.

The first step in the EIR process is called scoping, which will define the issues to be evaluated in the EIR. Release of the Notice of Preparation/ Initial Study (NOP/IS) launches the scoping period. The NOP/IS will identify the probable environmental effects that will be evaluated in the EIR. During the scoping comment period (November 15, 2010 - January 10, 2011) the public may provide input on the environmental topics, potential effects, mitigation measures, and range of alternatives to be analyzed in the project EIR.

Scoping comments may be submitted at the public scoping meetings or by mail or email anytime between November 15, 2010 and January 10, 2011. Please submit comments on the proposed project to:

Heidi Luckenbach
scwd² Desalination Program Coordinator
City of Santa Cruz, Water Department
212 Locust Street, Suite C
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Email: hluckenbach@cityofsantacruz.com

In an effort to make scoping accessible and convenient for our community and agency personnel, the City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District will hold two EIR scoping meetings on Wednesday, December 8, 2010:

1. **First Congregational Church**, 900 High Street, Santa Cruz: **12:00 – 2:30 PM**
2. **New Brighton Middle School**, 250 Washburn Avenue, Capitola: **6:30 – 9:00 PM**

Each meeting will include an open house and presentation, followed by a public comment period. The same information will be presented at each meeting. Meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Requests for special accommodations or translation services should be directed to staff at 831-475-8500 for Spanish no later than five days before the meeting.

Please contact Melanie Mow Schumacher, **scwd²** Public Outreach Coordinator, at (831) 475-8501x153 or melanies@soquelcreekwater.org with any questions about this meeting or the public input process. Additional information about the project and public meetings can be found at www.scwd2desal.org.

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