



City of Santa Cruz Water Department and Soquel Creek Water District scwd² Desalination Program

Monthly Project Update & Latest News – December 2011

Reminder! This Thursday is the Community Meeting on Energy and Climate Impacts related to Desalination

An informational community meeting on “Desalination: Energy Use and Greenhouse Gases” is scheduled for December 8, 2011 at Live Oak School , 1916 Capitola Road, Santa Cruz, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Come to this community meeting to learn:

- How much electricity would the desalination project use?
- What is the carbon footprint of the project?
- Who is working on the energy evaluation? Local representatives? Technical experts?
- What level of GHG reduction is required?
- What projects can be used to reduce the carbon footprint to acceptable levels?
- When do we initiate and implement projects?

Presentations will be given by Heidi Luckenbach (scwd² Desalination Program Coordinator, City of Santa Cruz), Susie O’Hara (Assistant Engineer, City of Santa Cruz), Todd Reynolds (Senior Engineer, Kennedy/Jenks), and Julia Sorensen (Civil Engineer, Kennedy/Jenks). A question and answer session will follow the presentations. For more information on this meeting, please visit [http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Project-phases Informational Meeting December 2011.php](http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Project-phases%20Informational%20Meeting%20December%202011.php). For a project flyer: http://www.scwd2desal.org/documents/Meetings/informational-mtgs/EnergyDesal_flyer_2011.pdf.

Inquisitive Minds Want to Know ...

This is an ongoing section that answers frequently asked questions related to the proposed desalination project and/or our local water supplies. For more FAQs, please visit the FAQs section of www.scwd2desal.org.

Q: What are the top issues that the City of Santa Cruz (SCWD) and Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) would like to clarify as we wrap up 2011?

Our local water issues have sparked a lot of community interest. As with every complex issue, distilled information can be misleading or unclear. Below are discussions on several recent topics that we’d like to provide some clarification on.

- 1) **The water shortage issues both agencies are facing are not growth-related.** They are a result of several environmental conditions that have been exacerbated by current uses. The over-extraction of the groundwater aquifer has resulted in an unsustainable groundwater basin that is vulnerable to

contamination by seawater intrusion. There is an inadequate water supply to meet customer demands during drought conditions. And, the anticipated restrictions on the amount of surface water that can be taken to ensure there is enough water in local streams and rivers to protect threatened and endangered species. Technical studies conducted by the SCWD and SqCWD have shown the need for a supplemental supply that is intended as a replacement for some of the current supply each agency now relies on, but must reduce for environmental reasons.

- 2) **No decision has been made on whether or not to construct the proposed desalination plant.** The agencies have identified a need for supplemental supply in addition to conservation and curtailment. Desalination was identified as this supplemental supply component and this project is currently in the evaluation phase. A draft environmental impact report (EIR) of the project is scheduled to be released in spring 2012. In order to fully inform the environmental review process and gather technical information, it has been necessary to fund numerous studies and interact with the community, regulators, and technical experts. Approval of the project would follow certification of the EIR. For more information on the environmental review process, visit [http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Project-phases EIR.php](http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Project-phases_EIR.php).
- 3) **The City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District both have award winning conservation programs in place- but conservation alone does not solve our water shortage problems.** Currently both agencies are looking at what new conservation programs they can enact in the coming years. Some in our community argue that more conservation could eliminate the need for a supplemental supply – but conservation is already included in a diverse water portfolio that includes the proposed desalination project.
- 4) **Desalination requires more electricity than existing surface and groundwater treatment processes; however, it's useful to put the electricity needs into perspective.** The proposed power needs during the average annual use of the proposed desal project by Soquel Creek Water District during non-drought conditions and the City of Santa Cruz during drought conditions is comparable to the electricity used by a mid-size hospital or the electricity used for a mid-sized indoor shopping mall. For more information, visit <http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Energy.php>.
- 5) **Desalination with reverse osmosis membranes is a proven technology and is used in more than 120 countries in more than 15,000 plants that produce hundreds of million gallons per day.** Desalination facilities currently in operation locally include the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the City of Sand City. A larger facility in Tampa Bay, FL is also in operation. That facility did experience start up issues related to public/private ownership and pretreatment modifications; however, these issues do not apply to the **scwd²** project since our project includes two public municipalities and a yearlong

pilot study that evaluated the optimal pretreatment process specific for water from the Monterey Bay. Several other coastal California communities are looking at desalination as a potential source to replace their state imported water that has been limited due to the environmental impacts.

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