

# Section 2

## Public Outreach Program

Public outreach activities were included as a part of the pilot test program to provide opportunities for the public to tour the facility, learn more about the desalination process and the need for a supplemental source of water in the region, and ask questions regarding these topics. Public outreach materials and display boards were developed to facilitate the learning process and to provide information on how to stay informed about the project during and after the pilot test program.

The public outreach activities also enabled staff from SCWD and SqCWD to engage effectively with members of the public and concerned interest groups about their views and ideas regarding the potential supplemental supply source of desalinated water.

The public outreach activities were crucial to the success of the pilot test program because water users and interest groups will ultimately play an important role in the feasibility of constructing and operating a desalination plant in Santa Cruz for SCWD and SqCWD.

### 2.1 Public Outreach Summary

The objective of the public outreach program was to use the pilot plant as a way to inform and educate the public on the need for an additional water supply, the feasibility of using seawater as a drinking water source, and the actual science and components of the desalination process.

The pilot plant provided an excellent forum for people to ask questions both during public tours and scheduled events. It is estimated that over 1,000 people toured the pilot plant including groups of students, interested water customers, tourists, regulators, industry professionals, and environmental special interest groups, the majority of which had never seen a seawater desalination system.

The outcome of the public outreach activities was that people were exposed to desalination as a reliable drinking water supply and were informed of both the feasibility and challenges associated with implementing desalination.



**Pretreatment Filter and RO Membrane Educational Display Area in the Pilot Plant Building**

## 2.2 Public Outreach Events and Tours

Public events and tours were scheduled throughout the testing period and included:

- The pilot plant groundbreaking event in July 2007 by Santa Cruz City Council and SqCWD Board members.
- The pilot plant grand opening on March 20, 2008, which included a press conference, a “valve turning ceremony” to inaugurate pilot plant operations, and tours of the pilot plant for members of the **scwd<sup>2</sup>** task force, the media, and SCWD and SqCWD management staff.
- A pilot plant open house on November 8, 2008, which included presentations and tours of the pilot facility to approximately 150 attendees.
- Public informational meetings in Santa Cruz on April 22, 2009 and in Soquel on September 24, 2009 which included multiple presentations summarizing the pilot test program results and information on the overall project to over two hundred attendees.
- The California/Nevada section of the American Water Works Association (CA/NV AWWA) Spring 2009 Conference Tour which included a pilot test program summary presentation and a tour of the pilot facility to over 50 industry professionals.
- Scheduled tours and/or presentations to local community groups, environmental organizations, students and special interest groups.
- Monthly in-depth public tours on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month.
- Daily docent-led pilot plant tours available to the public.
- Public community television mini-documentary: Understanding Desalination.
- Monterey Bay Water Works Association Desalination Forum in October 2008 which included presentations and tours of the pilot plant.



Open House Event

The daily tours of the pilot plant facility were available to the public as requested as a part of the daily docent-led tours of Seymour Center and Long Marine Lab (LML) facilities, which included a visit to the dolphins and sea lions across the fence from the pilot plant. Two docent training sessions were conducted by SCWD and CDM staff to provide information on the purpose and objectives of the Pilot Test Program and overall project.



Water Cooler for Tasting the Desalinated Water at the Pilot Plant

The public outreach activities and pilot test program were covered in local newspapers, television news broadcasts, and other media outlets. The list of articles and broadcasts is included on the project website via the following address: [http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-In-the\\_News.php](http://www.scwd2desal.org/Page-In-the_News.php).

## 2.3 Taste Testing

The desalination process produces high quality water with very low concentrations of minerals. Because of the low mineral concentrations, the taste of the desalinated water is typically “flat” and not satisfactory. To both improve taste and minimize corrosion in the distribution system, minerals and alkalinity are added after the desalination process (i.e. post-treatment).

Post-treatment chemicals were added to the desalinated water from the pilot plant to provide re-mineralized desalinated water to the public to compare with the existing drinking water. Post-treatment also included disinfection and mixing to comply with maximum DPH regulations even though water served in this fashion does not fall under DPH jurisdiction. Following post-treatment, the water was available from water coolers at the pilot plant and the SCWD and SqCWD offices for sampling.



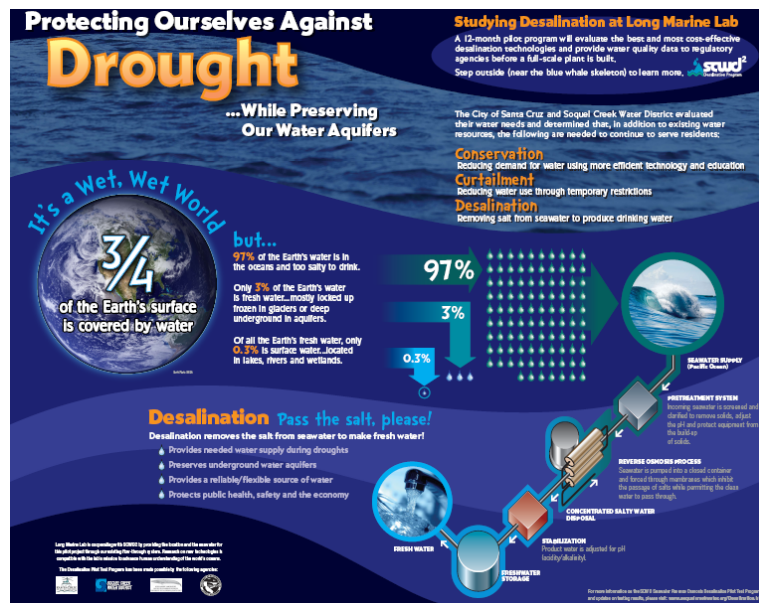
March 2009 Taste Test Event

In March 2009, a “blind” water taste test event was conducted in celebration of World Water Day and the collaborative work by the two water agencies. This blind taste test included water from local municipal sources, commercial bottled water and post-treated water from the **scwd**<sup>2</sup> seawater desalination pilot plant. The taste test panel included a selected group of individuals representing the public, elected officials, and the local media. The results indicated that the desalinated water tasted similar to treated water from the existing supply.

## 2.4 Public Outreach Materials

Public outreach materials were primarily developed for events and were displayed at the Seymour Center and pilot plant, both located on the LML campus. Materials included a large display board within the Seymour Center, a large display board on the outside of the pilot plant building, several portable display boards, pilot program handouts, and pilot program update newsletters.

The handouts and newsletters were distributed at all public outreach events and daily at the SCWD and SqCWD offices. Public outreach materials in electronic format were also available on the project website: [www.scwd2desal.org](http://www.scwd2desal.org). Copies of the display boards, handouts, and newsletters are included in Appendix B.



Information Board on display inside the Seymour Discovery Center



Dan Kriege, Bruce Daniels, and Ed Porter of the **scwd**<sup>2</sup> Desalination Task Force break ground at the site of the Pilot Plant located at UCSC Long Marine Laboratory. (July 2007)



Tour for members of the **scwd**<sup>2</sup> Desalination Task Force and the local media during the Grand Opening Event. (March 2008)



SCWD and SqCWD staff conducted an open house event which was attended by approximately 150 people. (November 2008)



The blind taste test panel included individuals representing the public, elected officials, and the media. (March 2009)



Scheduled tours for students and special interest groups were available upon request and were led by CDM, SCWD, and/or SqCWD staff. (March 2008 – April 2009)

