



GENE BREGMAN & ASSOCIATES
Public Opinion & Marketing Research

DRAFT MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Brown, General Manager
Soquel Creek Water District

From: Gene Bregman
Gene Bregman & Associates

Date: December 21, 2010

Re: Public Opinion Survey

This memo presents the main findings from a telephone study conducted by Gene Bregman & Associates on behalf of the Soquel Creek Water District. A total of 300 voters who reside in the District were interviewed from November 12-14, 2010. A survey of this size has a margin of error ranging from +/- 3.4% to +/- 5.6%, depending on response levels to a particular question.

1. In general, between two-thirds and three-fourths of the voters see three local water problems as the most serious ones facing the community:

- Inadequate water supplies for our future needs
- Protecting our drinking water from being contaminated by salt water from the ocean
- Keeping our water supplies safe and secure

2. Most voters in the Soquel Creek Water District feel that building a desalination plant is a good idea. When first asked about the plant, approximately two-thirds (68 percent) said the plant was either an "excellent idea" or a "good idea" with just 23 percent saying it was "not too good an idea" or a "poor" idea. After hearing reasons that supporters and opponents of the plant give for their opinions, there was only a slight change, with 66 percent having a positive opinion of the plant and 27 percent having a negative opinion.



3. **The main reasons to support the plant are related to water supplies and the safety and cleanliness of the water.** Some of these reasons are as follows:
 - Groundwater aquifers that supply the District have been in a state of overdraft for nearly 20 years
 - More groundwater is being pumped out every year than is being replenished by rainfall
 - A desalination plant will better protect the health and safety of the community and provide a more reliable source of water than any other feasible option to increase water supplies
 - Without the desalination plant there is a real danger of seawater intrusion contaminating and depleting the water supply
 - Desalination is being successfully used in over 120 countries, here in California, and in other places with limited water supplies
 - Desalination produces water that is cleaner and has fewer contaminants than water from local rivers and reservoirs
4. **Voters' main concerns about the plant are related to how the plant will affect their water bills and possible environmental effects.** Some people are particularly worried about possible effects on marine life and marine habitats and some want to be sure that all other options have been exhausted before a desalination plant is built.
5. **Voters like living here.** In fact, 84 percent said Santa Cruz County was an "excellent" or a "good" place to live. Just 4 percent said it was a "poor" place to live.
6. **Similarly, opinions of the Soquel Creek Water District are very positive.** About three people in four (76 percent) said the District is doing an "excellent" or "good" job, while just 4 percent said it was doing a "poor" job.
7. **A large majority (79 percent) agree that they "have already cut**



back on water use for my home as much as I can; there's not much more I can do to save water." Just 19 percent disagreed with this statement.

8. **Twice as many people (62 percent) said that we need to find new sources of water to solve our long-term water supply problems as said that using less will solve those problems (31 percent).**
9. **Two-thirds of these voters (67 percent) had heard about the desalination plant proposal.** Nearly twice as many said they had at least some knowledge of the plant as said they either knew only a little or had "just heard of it."

In short, with a favorable opinion of the Soquel Creek Water District, residents are very favorable towards the District building a desalination plant that they will share with the City of Santa Cruz during drought years. They recognize that their water supplies are threatened by seawater intrusion and that desalination is proving to be a safe way to assure adequate future water supplies. While some are understandably concerned about how the plant will affect their water bills, most see the need for the plant.