

CAPITOLA SOQUEL TIMES

COMMUNITY NEWS THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Vol 17 No. 3

Serving Central Santa Cruz County

2012 TPG Poetry Contest Winners



The Times Publishing Valentines Day Poetry Contest for 2012 was an opportunity to reward local poets (and their sweethearts) from Capitola/Soquel with the ultimate romantic reward – Dinner for two at Michael's on Main.

Our readers once again proved just how romantic a place Santa Cruz County truly is! Poems entered in the 2012 TPG Valentines Day Poetry Contest were steamy, passionate, funny, touching, and (of course) romantic.

Poets from all over took the time to compose and submit their odes of love expressing love and affection for their special valentines. Once again, our staff had the difficult task of selecting the winner for each of our three newspapers.

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Paul Meyerhofer, Pilot Plant Project Manager, explains operations.

Water Wars – Part One

THE 'WHY' OF DESALINATION FOR SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

By Noel Smith

To Desal or not to Desal, that is the question. The Santa Cruz Water Department and the Soquel Creek Water District believe that is the most rational option to ensure an adequate, consistent water supply for the future. They have formed

a partnership known as scwd2 to pursue a regional seawater desalination program. A pilot plant at UCSC's Long Marine lab facility has already addressed the technical issues of seawater intake, brine disposal, and quality of the water produced.

The results of all this testing can be found on the scwd2

website, www.scwd2desal.org along with an explanation of why desalination is considered the best long-term choice for additional supply.

Why is more water needed?

California is subject to droughts. In the late 70's Santa Cruz County suffered a three-year drought, but there

have been documented periods of little rain lasting five years and longer. Without a new and reliable water supply, such protracted dry spells would seriously affect our local economy, environment, and quality of life.

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Our tourist economy — which includes hotels and restaurants — would suffer, agricultural income would be hurt, hospitals and schools would be first priority while residents would see their lawns and gardens dry up and shower-sharing would become a necessity, not just recreational.

Most of Santa Cruz County is unique in that we are entirely dependent on local sources for our water. The Santa Cruz Water Department, serving an area from the North Coast to Capitola, depends on surface water (runoff) for its water supply with Loch Lomond reservoir as the primary source during the dry season. The Mid County (Capitola, Aptos, La Selva Beach) depends on the Soquel Creek Water District for its water. Despite its name, the District doesn't depend on Soquel Creek for its water — it all comes from wells, which are already overdrafted and are at risk of being ruined by saltwater intrusion into the underlying aquifer.

So here are two adjacent water companies with different problems. The Santa Cruz Water District customers — dependent on runoff — will suffer if there is a drought while the Soquel Creek Water District will suffer from continuing to overdraft their source of water. In order to reduce water demand, both districts have successfully promoted water conservation to the point where their customers use 30 percent less water per person than the rest of California.

But no matter how much their customers conserve, they are each still are faced with the potential problems of drought for one, and saltwater intrusion for the other.



What is the solution?

How to provide a consistent supply of water in all conditions is the problem that each has struggled with for over fifty years. There is no outside source of water coming into the county in a pipeline or canal that they can draw upon. As far as water is concerned, we are on our own.

However, there is a rather abundant source of water available that borders the county — the Pacific Ocean. By drawing water out of the ocean and removing the organic material and the minerals in order to desalinate the water, both Water Districts have a solution to their respective problem.

With desalination, the Santa Cruz Water Department would have a source of water that wouldn't depend on yearly rainfall totals which they would be able to draw upon it during the dry months of summer and periods of severe or extended drought.

With desalination, the Soquel Creek Water District would have a source that would allow them to reduce or even cease pumping water from their wells thereby allowing the aquifers to recharge and thus preventing further saltwater intrusion. In the case of a drought, the Santa Cruz Water Department would get the desalinated water and the Soquel Creek Water District would go back to pumping until the rains returned. This is what is known as an elegant or win-win solution that

makes good economic and environmental sense.

So, what is all the fuss about?

There is a group, Santa Cruz Desalination Alternatives, which insists that there is no justification for using desalination because there are viable alternatives, that Desal is too expensive and uses too much energy. Some of the hypothetical alternatives to desalination they have presented:

- Recovering more water from the Santa Cruz River

Three problems with that are: 1.) Where do you store it to prepare for a drought? There is no additional reservoir capacity, and future reservoirs face immense environmental, legal, cost and regulatory hurdles. 2.) We know that federal and state regulators will require the City to decrease the amount of water it currently draws from streams, to provide habitat protection for endangered species. 3) In drought years, there's no water in the river to take.

- Recycling Sewage Water

Recycling sewage water or gray water for human use is illegal. Using it for non-human use (parks, golf courses, etc.) is costly because it takes building a separate distribution system and would be limited in its impact on overall water usage.

"Desalination" > 6

Ordinance Proposed for Community Vote on Desalination

Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane and Santa Cruz City Councilmember David Terrazas issued the following press release this week announcing a proposed ordinance to mandate a vote of the people on desalination. Below is the press release and proposed ordinance.

Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane and Santa Cruz City Councilmember David Terrazas, both representatives for the City of Santa Cruz on the scwd2 Desalination Task Force, announced their plans to bring an ordinance to the February 28 City Council meeting.

The ordinance would mandate a vote of the people before proceeding to

construction of a local desalination facility while avoiding significant flaws contained in a competing measure.

Lane and Terrazas released the following statement:

There is strong community consensus that the voters should have the opportunity to make the call on how Santa Cruz will address our need for long-term drought protection and the protection of our coastal aquifers.

And the community should weigh in on, how we will meet State/Federal mandates to protect endangered fish species with a likely reduced draw of water from local streams.

"Vote" > 6

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scwd2 Desalination Program Update

As a reminder, the City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District have publicly stated that no decision has been made on the approval of a desalination project. Both agencies are focused on continuing the evaluation phase of the project to fully inform the public and decision-makers of the environmental impacts and associated costs. To that end, it is imperative to continue with the analyses and the environmental review process, which will serve to inform and encourage comments from the entire community.

Extensive efforts are currently underway towards providing a thorough and rigorous evaluation of environmental impacts and alternatives

related to the proposed desalination project. The release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is scheduled for sometime this year, possibly as early as this spring and will be followed by a public review period, during which there will be opportunities for the public to provide comments on the document. Responses to comments will be prepared and provided to both governing bodies (City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District) for their consideration prior to certifying the Final EIR. The project may not be approved without a certified EIR. For more information, visit www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Project-phases_EIR.php.

Video Footage on Recent Community Meeting about Desalination: Energy and Climate Impacts Now Available On-Line

Is the proposed desalination project's typical energy use comparable to (a) the wastewater treatment plant, (b) a mid-size hospital or (c) an amusement park? Visit www.scwd2desal.org/Page-Energy-Calcs.php to see a comparison chart used at our recent Energy Meeting or www.communitytv.org/programs/online/seawater-desalination-energy-use-and-climate-change-impacts to view the video of the presentation material and the question/answer period that was filmed by Community TV of Santa Cruz County. ■



"Vote" from pg 5

A flawed ballot measure has been put forward by desal opponents which does not offer a timely opportunity for democratic decision-making to address our community's water needs. Unfortunately, that measure unintentionally would create an expensive delay in community decision making and would lead to greater uncertainty in our water planning process.

This new ordinance, should it pass at the February 28, 2012 City Council meeting, would provide a simpler and more straightforward way to ensure a democratic decision about water and desalination.

This new proposal would provide a

fair and timely ballot choice to Santa Cruz City voters by:

- Requiring the Santa Cruz City Council to obtain voter approval for the City to participate in the construction of a desalination facility;
- Structuring the ordinance to allow for a citizen vote as soon as practicable rather than unnecessarily delaying the people's vote on water issues for an extra year or even more;
- Saving the community money in terms of duplicative election costs and in terms of project costs that increase with long delays;
- Ensuring that the ballot measure is neutral on the issues, in contrast to the

competing ballot measure, which contains questionable assumptions and biased rhetoric;

- Ensure the vote comes after completion of the Environmental Impact Report (likely in the first half of 2013).

In anticipation of concerns that a city ordinance could be undone and deny voters their right to weigh in, Lane explained the strength of the ordinance's commitment: "Once adopted, if the City Council ever moved to repeal it, a single voter could file a simple referendum petition and suspend that repeal. That relatively simple filing action would keep the ordinance in place until the people had a chance to decide. The voters would still have the final word."

Terrazas added: "There is strong community consensus for a public vote on this issue and the question will ultimately be going to the voters one way or another. Let's provide this opportunity now – to guide our current decision making and to help shape the substantive discussion and decisions required to meet our long-term water needs." ■

To view the press release in .pdf format, visit: www.scwd2desal.org/documents/press_release/desal%20voting%20press%20release.pdf

To view the proposed ordinance in .pdf format, visit: www.scwd2desal.org/documents/press_release/desal_voting_ord_proposed.pdf

"Desalination" from pg 5

• More Water Conservation

The county is already one of the lowest urban water usage areas in the state. Additional conservation could be achieved, but not enough to solve the water supply shortfall that both districts face. We would be hard pressed to save significantly more without causing health and quality of life issues.

• Water Sharing

The only other local water district with large enough resources that could share water with Santa Cruz in a drought is the Soquel Creek Water District. 1.) Water sharing would mean pumping more water from their wells, which accelerates saltwater intrusion. 2.) Recharging the aquifer through water sharing means taking water from the San Lorenzo River, which federal regulators are unlikely to permit. 3.) Recharging an aquifer is not a seasonal

exercise, as it takes a lot longer to recharge than it does to remove the water.

• Water Neutral Development

Water neutral development does not improve the situation because it does not provide additional water for use in a drought or for recharging an aquifer. It puts enormous economic burden on new projects, thus creating a major disincentive for new housing, commercial or public uses that the community may actually support.

Each of these proposed alternatives to desalination falls short of addressing sufficiently the problems of potential drought

Desalination is an opportunity for the people of this county to help return the environment to what it once was for both its current and original inhabitants while providing a sustainable water supply for future generations.

for the citizens served by the Santa Cruz Water Department and the recharging of the aquifers that the Soquel Creek Water District depends on to serve its communities.

The Effect on the Environment

Environmental issues, including energy use and offsets, water intake and outflow, protection of

North Coast streams and the mid-county aquifer are being addressed in the detailed Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which is now in process. We will cover these in depth in a future "Water Wars."

But there are two significant "wins" for the environment if a desalination

plant is built:

- The aquifers that have been drawn on for so long will have the opportunity to recover allowing local springs and streams to return to their original flow rates in Mid-County.
- With their increased flows, the larger streams and rivers (San Lorenzo River, Soquel Creek, Aptos Creek etc.) will become a friendlier habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Desalination is an opportunity for the people of this county to help return the environment to what it once was for both its current and original inhabitants while providing a sustainable water supply for future generations. ■

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We welcome your comments. Email them to: info@cyber-times.com

Coming Soon: Water Wars – Part Two – The Economics of Desalination for Santa Cruz County