

Droughts ReFramed, by MMWD

"Neighborhood Speak"-----by Steve Patterson—Federation of SR Neighborhoods

Are you following the many moves of MMWD to “weave and bob” and try and “head-fake” ratepayers regarding the need for a DeSal plant on the edge of our polluted Bay? Faced recently with a highly professional analysis of additional conservation and supply management efforts that could be undertaken by MMWD in lieu of spending a \$100 million dollars (at least) to build a DeSal plant, MMWD is going to develop a planning scenario that would involve 3 consecutive years of severe drought. Of course the likelihood of that happening would be about once in every 200 years.

Well this is being done because of the report commissioned by Food and Water Watch (offices in SF) prepared by Jim Fryer, former head of water conservation programs at MMWD throughout most of the 90's. The report, “Sustaining our Water Future”, is an exordinally well written document, even if a bit technical. It is an analytical and detailed report of about 50 pages, with more the 200 end-notes that supply the documentation to substantiate many of the conclusions and recommendations contained within the body of the report.

What is recommended is BETTER management of the existing operations of the current reservoir supply system which it appears MMWD has begun to partially implement in some cases. But there are further opportunities to create greater efficiencies within the current system so that all the available water is utilized efficiently and delivered in a cost effective way for ratepayers.

Fryer makes a number of recommendations of programs that should be considered as a way to broaden the current conservation programs presently in place. Because of the technical accuracy of the report, it has been impossible for the District to refute the report content. A few lame surrogates of MMWD have tried but have meant fierce opposition to their arguments.

And while this gets some press coverage, none of it is front page coverage so it is easy to miss the articles that appear imbedded in various publications. So rather than listening to what members of the public are saying about DeSal, MMWD changes their drought analysis and shifts to a 3 year drought paradigm. In a 3 year paradigm, conservation makes having a normal water supply very challenging, so under that analysis DeSal looks to be the greatest and best option. Anyone who knows a bit about risk analysis quickly realizes that to build and pay for an event that “might” happen every 200 years is short of “NUTS”. A once every 200 year drought scenario makes it highly speculative and quite unlikely. But this illustrates the lengths that MMWD is willing to go to sell the concept of DeSal to the public.

I urge people to go online and read the Fryer report and form their own conclusions about the value of expanded conservation and supply programs.

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/desalination/marin>

Critical Facilities in San Rafael—what's next?

So here is what we know. The cost of doing new facilities while retrofitting others spanning Police, Fire depts and the Library would be around \$120 million dollars. It is not clear what the appetite of the voting public is, given the current economic climate. Professional polling has just been completed to assess the degree of support that might exist and by early August a decision will need to be made by the Critical Facilities Committee and the City Council about what type of ballot measure can be placed on the November ballot or whether it should be delayed. The prevailing thinking would indicate that some type of parcel tax or general obligation bond measure will likely see the light of day based on supportive polling data.

The one thing that is known is that San Rafael's facilities are functionally obsolete and could likely not withstand a major seismic event leaving many of them crippled or unavailable to function. Obviously, this would impede any meaningful recovery efforts and put lives at risk.

Once again, stay tuned...

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