

TITLE-----MMWD—Time for Regime Change??

“*Neighborhood Speak*”-----by Steve Patterson—Federation of SR Neighborhoods

With the recent certification of the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) regarding the creation of a Desalinization Plant in San Rafael, the water district has clearly signaled that it strongly supports Desalinization as a viable water source (confirmed at subsequent 2/11 meeting). At the certification meeting (2/4 meeting), 200 people attended and about 60 people spoke with probably 80% of those indicating their “lack” of support for DeSal and an urging that MMWD embrace more conservation efforts. The Board seems to think it is doing all it can currently with conservation and already spends millions of dollars in that effort

If that is the case, why has the district not expanded conservation beyond its current focus and tried to look at the issue in a more creative way? And why does it seem to not even be receptive to hearing new ideas, often responding in a patronizing manner? There are fairly easy things that could easily save massive amounts of water but they do require the commitment of MMWD. These issues certainly should be looked at carefully before any forward effort takes place with DeSal. However, MMWD appears to be on a mission to build a desalination plant, and the public be dammed!

Currently:

Desalination is being looked at as “only in Marin” or maybe “only for San Quentin” solution, but with a NO broader regional focus for expanded solutions to create economies of scale. Many counties are in worse shape than Marin. Why no regional solution option?

There is NO effort to assist property owners who own rental property to help educate tenants and affect their behavior. Installing low flow appliances do not save water by themselves. What truly would makes sense is for sub-meters to be installed so that individual renters pay their own water bills rather than include water costs in their rental. This will help encourage renters to save water once they know its cost and what their levels of use actually are. At this point there is not even an education program to assist property owners.

There is NO effort to work with business building owners to educate those tenants and how they can conserve water while at work. There are at least 75,000 jobs in Marin and that translates into lots of water being consumed. Low flow appliances do not work by themselves, unless accompanied by an education program to alter behavior.

There is NO effort to support the installation of waterless urinals in businesses and public buildings that could save huge amounts of water.

There is NO effort to replace water meters that leak and are inefficient with more modern devices. One type of meter is real time water metering involves

additional computerization such that a property owner and MMWD can see precisely when water is used and in what amounts so that one can get a better picture of how water is being used over time. Current water metering does provide usage information but is only recorded on a once per month or bi-monthly basis. This does not provide a picture of the day to day patterns of use. This would play an important role if water usage would need to be cut back or rationed in some way.

There is NO real effort to support and champion the use of grey water or cisterns for landscape watering which consumes huge amounts of water supply every summer during the growing season.

There is almost NO effort to actively integrate water conservation with the biggest customer—San Quentin. A few appliances have been installed, but it is feeble compared to consumption and the behavior of inmates has not changed.

There is NO effort to enforce and penalize water wasters—often big institutional consumers of water who excessively water their landscapes and watch as it runs down curbs/gutters/sidewalks.

And there is NO receptivity to discussing any possibility of creating a new reservoir or increasing the height of any current existing dams, for fear of the impacts on Coho salmon. Does a reservoir always mean that Coho salmon have to be negatively impacted? Many think not!

So rather than consider seriously any of the possible options above, MMWD has chosen to potentially spend at least \$100,000,000 dollars, consume massive amounts of electricity to run a DeSal plant, install huge water tanks on ridge tops, impact marine life in a negative manner, and retrieve bay water in the same area where the Central Marin Sanitation District pumps out their treated sewage discharge in the Bay. Oh, yummy doesn't that sound tasty.

So since MMWD seems out of touch with the customer base, seems to ignore many good ideas, has a seemingly fervent mission about DeSal or bust, and displays an almost arrogant attitude towards members of the public at their monthly meetings, then maybe it is time to discuss a change of directors and others at MMWD who are more customer oriented and are less isolated and insulated.

Comments or suggestions—stephenpatterson.1@comcast.net or 453-6541
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