

GM Column – Environmental Impact Report 2011

The District's policy is to have sufficient pumping capacity to meet the maximum day demand for water plus a 20% safety factor in the case of a mechanical failure or water quality issue in one or more wells. Because of the arsenic treatment facilities, the District has become more vulnerable to equipment failure than in the past. If an arsenic treatment facility goes down, it will take two wells offline. When looking at standby emergency capacity, one should prepare for the greatest potential need. Though the year 2010 saw considerably less water usage for several reasons including higher water conservation rates and cooler weather, we need to base our safety factor on the highest usage in recent history. The District does not have sufficient redundant capacity (standby emergency capacity) to meet maximum day demand plus the 20% safety factor when we consider its historical record. Re-equipping two existing wells for standby emergency capacity will correct this in Phase 1 of the Water Supply Improvement Project.

The District does have emergency interties with both the Navy and Searles Valley Minerals for catastrophic emergency conditions. The interties are for mutual aid in such event, and the emergency standby capacity of each (District, Navy, and SVM) could be used to provide water to the others if it is available during such an event. These are goodwill relationships, and we each will provide the others with what excess water we have available at the time. This is different from the District's own reserve capacity, which is specifically planned, dedicated, and maintained standby equipment that is always ready.

Additionally, it is prudent to plan for normal growth that may occur. While many do not foresee growth soon, there have been surprises in the past. So what do we do? The Kern Council of Governments is responsible for making population projections for cities and local governments. Their projections for our area are modest, about 1 percent per year, and the District has adopted them for planning. Construction of one new well for growth is in Phase 2. The District will NOT construct Phase 2 until the projected growth actually occurs, but the plans will be in place.

The District has considered several alternatives to the Water Supply Improvement Project while preparing its Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Three alternatives, were rejected because they do not meet the needs and objectives of the District, are not feasible, cannot be accomplished in a timely manner and with certitude, or would cost more. Five alternatives, including an alternative that examines what would happen if the District does not do this project, were considered in the EIR. Not doing the Water Supply Improvement Project would be unacceptable because that would not provide a cost effective, safe, and reliable water supply for the District's customers during peak summer days; would not provide a 20 percent system redundancy to ensure water supply to District customers; and would not meet the District's current and future water production requirements. After reviewing all of the alternatives, the EIR found that the proposed project would have the fewest environmental impacts and still meet the objectives of the District.

The funds for the environmental study and the improvements for Phase 1 (standby emergency capacity) are already provided in undisbursed money in the 2009 Bond financing and in existing reserves for capital improvements. This project will not result in an increase in water rates. In fact, over the long run, constructing Phase 1 now will likely be less expensive than in the future.

The draft EIR is available for review online at www.iwvwd.com, at the District's offices, and at the Ridgecrest public library. Additionally, there will be two public meetings where the draft EIR will be presented and questions answered. Written comments may also be submitted at upcoming public meetings:

5PM, Tuesday, November 8
Inyokern Senior Center
1247 Broadway Ave, Inyokern

5PM, Wednesday, November 9
Ridgecrest City Council Chambers
100 W. California, Ridgecrest

Finally, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, the public review period began October 25 to solicit comments and input on the Draft EIR. Written comments regarding the scope and content of information in the Draft EIR, or any questions regarding the Draft EIR, should be postmarked no later than December 9, 2011 to:

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