



**Desalination Task Force
Regular Meeting
7:00 p.m. – Wednesday, February 20, 2013**

**Soquel Creek Water District Board Room
5180 Soquel Drive, Soquel CA 95073**

Agenda

The Desalination Task Force consists of two members of the Soquel Creek Water District Board and two members of the City of Santa Cruz City Council.

Call to Order and introduction of Councilmembers Mathews and Comstock

Roll Call

Presentation *Organized groups may make presentations to the Desalination Task Force. Presentations that require more than three minutes should be scheduled in advance with staff from the City of Santa Cruz Water Department or the Soquel Creek Water District.*

Statements of Disqualification *Section 607 of the City Charter states that "...All members present at any meeting must vote unless disqualified, in which case the disqualification shall be publicly declared and a record thereof made."*

Oral Communications

Announcements *No action shall be taken on this item.*

The Chair may announce and set time limits at the beginning of each agenda item.

Approval of Minutes (Pages 4-6)

Recommendation: Motion to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2012 meeting.

Information Items (Pages 7-10) *No action will be taken on this item.*

1. 2013 City Council appointments to the scwd² Desalination Task Force ☆ (Page 7)
2. 2013 Meeting Schedule (Revised) ☆ (Page 8)
3. Correspondence from J. Bentley dated 01/17/2013 ☆ (Pages 9-10)

General Business (Pages 11-16)

Any document related to an agenda item for the General Business portion of this meeting distributed to the Desalination Task Force less than 72 hours before this meeting is available for inspection at the City of Santa Cruz Water Administration Office, 212 Locust Street, Suite A, Santa Cruz, California. These documents will also be available for review at the meeting.

1. Task Force Role, Progress, and Outlook ☆ (Pages 11-13)

Recommendation: for information only no action required.

2. Independent Technical Advisor – Kennedy/Jenks Contract Amendment No. 6, Task 7 ☆ (Pages 14-16)

Recommendation: Further evaluate and recommend approval of Task 7 from Kennedy/Jenks Consultants' Contract Amendment No. 6 and consider DWR grant opportunity and advise staff on how to proceed.

3. Public Outreach Liaison Assignments

Recommendation: Appoint one member from each agency to provide content oversight and review of all Outreach materials being prepared and to perform quarterly review of the Outreach Program including budgetary/expense related and past/future performance metrics.

Program Managers' Report

- A. Work Schedule
- B. Upcoming Tasks
- C. Additional or Amended Tasks
- D. Contacts with Regulatory Agencies/Requests from Regulatory Agencies
- E. Contracts
- F. Public Outreach Program
- G. Budget
- H. Report of Findings

Media Articles ☆ (Pages 17-x)

1. Media Article - Santa Cruz Good Times 12/12/12 ☆ (Pages 17-23)
2. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 12/19/12 ☆ (Pages 24-25)
3. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 12/22/12 ☆ (Pages 26-28)
4. Media Article - Santa Cruz Good Times 01/02/13 ☆ (Pages 29-30)
5. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 01/02/13 ☆ (Pages 31-32)
6. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 01/07/13 ☆ (Pages 33-34)
7. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 01/22/13 ☆ (Pages 35-36)
8. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 01/30/13 ☆ (Pages 37-38)
9. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 02/05/13 ☆ (Pages 39-40)
10. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 02/13/13 ☆ (Pages 41-42)

Items Initiated by Members for Future Agendas

Adjournment

The next regular meeting of the Desalination Task Force is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Santa Cruz Police Community Room, 155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, California

★ indicates materials included in packet

All information furnished to the scwd2 Desalination Task Force with this agenda is available at <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/index.aspx?page=1604> or http://scwd2desal.org/Page-Public_Meetings.php#agendas.

Please observe the following procedures for addressing the Task Force during oral communications or agenda items. The Task Force Chair will indicate the opportunity for public comment on each item. All those wishing to speak on an item should form a queue at the public microphone. Each speaker will be limited to a single presentation of up to three minutes per agenda item (time limits may be increased or decreased at the Chair's discretion). After all speakers have addressed the task force, the task force will deliberate and take action. Additional public comment will not be allowed during the deliberation unless the Chair specifically calls on someone in the audience.

Organized groups wishing to make a presentation are asked to contact the Task Force Secretary prior to the task force meeting.

Disability Access – the meeting room is wheelchair accessible. Please contact Donna Paul (831) 420-5200, if you need assistance in order to participate in a public meeting or if you need the agenda and public documents modified.



**Desalination Task Force
Regular Meeting
7:00 p.m. - Wednesday, December 19, 2012**

**Santa Cruz Police Community Room
155 Center Street Santa Cruz CA 95060**

Minutes

The Desalination Task Force consists of two members of the Soquel Creek Water District Board and two members of the City of Santa Cruz City Council.

Call to Order Chair B. Daniels called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Santa Cruz Police Community Room, 155 Center Street, Santa Cruz CA 95060.

Roll Call

Present: Director B. Daniels (Chair), Director B. Jaffe, Councilmember D. Lane and Councilmember D. Terrazas.

Staff: Interim General Manager T. Dufour, Water Director B. Kocher, Desalination Program Manager H. Luckenbach, Public Outreach Coordinator M. Schumacher.

Others: Director R. Meyers, M. Milan, Data Instincts and seven members of the public.

Presentation There were no presentations.

Statements of Disqualification There were no statements of disqualifications.

Oral Communications There were no oral communications.

Announcements

Chair B. Daniels introduced Director Rick Meyers who has replaced Director D. Kriege and will be an alternate to the Task Force.

Approval of Minutes

Councilmember D. Terrazas moved approval of the November 7, 2012 meeting will a correction on page 6 Program Managers Report delete the second individually. Councilmember D. Lane seconded.

VOICE VOTE MOTION CARRIED

AYES: B. Daniels (Chair), B. Jaffe, D. Lane and D. Terrazas.

NOES: None.

Information Item

1. 2013 Meeting Schedule

The Task Force requested that no meeting be scheduled for the month of August.

General Business

1. INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ADVISOR – CONTRACT RENEWAL (CONTRACT AMENDMENT NO. 6)

Water Director B. Kocher introduced this item and Public Outreach Coordinator M. Schumacher and M. Milan of Data Instincts provided the staff report and responded to task force questions. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be included in the original papers.

Oral Communications were made by P. Gratz, J. Bentley and J. Aird.

The Task Force requested that Contract Administration and the Outreach Subcommittee Process be discussion items on a future agenda.

Councilmember D. Lane moved to approve

- The expanded description of Tasks 1 through 5; and
- Task No. 8 (sans Tasks 8.2 and 8.3) in the amount \$86,000 with the direction that one member from each agency (B. Jaffe and Councilmember D. Lane) will provide content oversight and review of all Outreach materials being prepared and to perform quarterly review of the Outreach Program including budgetary/expense related and past/future performance metrics; and
- Staff provide further evaluation of Tasks 6 and 7 in order for Task Force discussion and consideration as stand-alone tasks at the January 2013 Task Force meeting; and
- Recommend that City Council approve Contract Amendment No. 6 as amended with Kennedy Jenks Consultants for Independent Technical Advisory Services for the scwd2 Desalination Program.

Councilmember D. Terrazas seconded.

VOICE VOTE MOTION CARRIED

AYES: B. Daniels (Chair), B. Jaffe, D. Lane and D. Terrazas.

NOES: None.

Program Managers' Report

Desalination Program Coordinator Luckenbach reported that a meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2013 in Sacramento with the “unified” group of State and Federal regulators and the schedule for release of the EIR is the end of March.

Media Articles No action was taken on this item.

1. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-07-12
2. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-08-12
3. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-24-12
4. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-27-12
5. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-27-12
6. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 11-27-12
7. Media Article - Santa Cruz Weekly 11-28-12
8. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 12-04-12
9. Media Article - Santa Cruz Sentinel 12-08-12

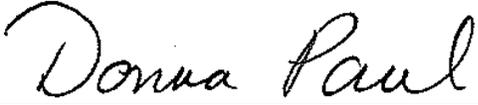
Items Initiated by Members for Future Agendas

Contract Administration
Outreach Subcommittee Process

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. until the next regular meeting of the Desalination Task Force is scheduled for Wednesday, January 16, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Soquel Creek Water District Board Room, 5180 Soquel Drive, Soquel, California

Respectfully submitted,



Staff

From: [Rosemary Balsley](#)
To: [Bill Kocher](#)
Cc: [Bren Lehr](#); [Donna Paul](#)
Subject: 2013 City Council Inside/Outside Agency Appointments
Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 3:25:45 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Bill:

This is to inform you that at the Council meeting of January 15, 2013, Mayor Hilary Bryant appointed Councilmembers Cynthia Mathews and Pamela Comstock as representatives and Councilmember Don Lane as alternate to serve on the City of Santa Cruz/Soquel Creek Water District Desalination Project Committee for 2013.

Thank you.

Rosemary Balsley
City Clerk's Division
420-5033



DATE: February 20, 2013
TO: Desalination Task Force
FROM: Donna Paul Administrative Assistant
SUBJECT: 2013 Task Force Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be held as needed on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. and rotate between the City of Santa Cruz (Police Community Room) and the Soquel Creek Water District Board Room.

January 16, 2013
Cancelled

July 17, 2013
Santa Cruz

February 20, 2013
Soquel

August 21, 2013
Soquel

March 20, 2013
Santa Cruz

September 18, 2013
Santa Cruz

April 17, 2013
Soquel

October 16, 2013
Soquel

May 15, 2013
Santa Cruz

November 20, 2013
Santa Cruz

June 19, 2013
Soquel

December 18, 2013
Soquel

From: [Jan +/-or Carla Bentley](#)
To: [Donna Paul](#)
Subject: communication to the SCWD2 Task force for their next meeting.
Date: Thursday, January 17, 2013 9:01:25 AM
Attachments: [SWRCBcontact.pdf](#)

SCWD2 Task Force:

Please review the attached communication I received from the SWRCB Division of Water Rights.

From the communication it appears that the City of Santa Cruz will be required to file a Petition for Change of Place of Use for their appropriate rights in order to exchange water with Soquel as proposed in the Joint Desalination Supply Project.

Why hasn't this requirement been noted in the EIR documents for this project?

How does the task force plan to deal with this requirement?

If it is anticipated that the City will file the petitions for Change of Place of Use, why is petitioning being delayed and why isn't it being recognized as eliminating one of the primary obstacles to the supply alternative of transferring the City's excess winter surface water resources to Soquel in exchange for their ground water.

In advance, thank you for your consideration, comments and reply to this communication.

Jim Bentley
718 Pacheco Ave.
Santa Cruz, Ca. 95065

RE: information request

Thursday, December 27, 2012 4:20 PM

From: "Kassel, Jim@Waterboards" <Jim.Kassel@waterboards.ca.gov>

To: "Jan +/-or Carla Bentley" <bentley410@yahoo.com>

Dear Mr. Bentley,

The appropriate water right for system A must include the place of use for any possible location that the water is delivered, despite an exchange with potable water from the desal facility. If the appropriate water right does not currently include all of the places of use, a petition to do so is required. Water Code Division 2, Chapter 11 does not provide an exception. Sections 1010 and 1735 should also not apply. Water transfers are for limited periods of time, not for permanent water supply systems.

Sincerely,

James W. Kassel, P.E.
Assistant Deputy Director for Water Rights
Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board

From: Jan +/-or Carla Bentley [mailto:bentley410@yahoo.com]

Sent: Monday, December 24, 2012 9:11 AM

To: Kassel, Jim@Waterboards

Subject: RE: information request

Mr. Kassel:

I have a follow up question to the reply you provided me below.

In this example there will be a new supply of water from a joint venture (A&B) desalination plant located in/adjacent to water system A. The desalination plant will be utilized alternately by systems A&B based on need. When system B is utilizing the plant, the desalinated water will be "wheeled" through system A's potable distribution system which will be connected to system B's system. Because of the distances involved, System B will never actually receive desalinated water and will actually receive water produced from system A's appropriate surface rights, i.e., system A will exchange its treated surface water for system B's treated salt water 1 for 1.

1. Does this arrangement require a petition for change of place of use on the part of system A (System B is not currently included as a place of use)?
2. And/or, does this fall under Water Code Div. 2, Chapter 11 Joint Use and Development?
3. And/or does Sec. 1010 and 1735 long term water transfers apply.

I don't expect a detailed explanation, I would just like to know if SWRCB would expect to be involved by way of petition or some other process you might indicate. I guess if the answer is "no", SWRCB would not be involved, you might point out why if you have the time.

Thank you again. Jim Bentley, Santa Cruz, 831-334-9496



DESALINATION TASK FORCE MEMORANDUM

TO: DESALINATION TASK FORCE

FROM: PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ADVISOR – KENNEDY/JENKS CONTRACT AMENDMENT NO. 6, TASK 7

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2013

RECOMMENDATION: Further evaluate and recommend approval of Task 7 from Kennedy/Jenks Consultants' Contract Amendment No. 6 and consider DWR grant opportunity and advise staff on how to proceed.

BACKGROUND: Kennedy/Jenks Consultants has been providing technical and program advisory services to staff on the **scwd**² Desalination Program(?) since 2008. At their November 7, 2012 meeting the Task Force approved the following (abbreviated) scope of work and budget proposed by staff for Kennedy/Jenks' sixth Contract Amendment.

- Task 1. Project Management and Quality Control (\$20,000)
- Task 2. Project Meetings (\$35,000)
- Task 3. Program Advisor Assistance (\$60,000)
- Task 4. Provide Assistance with the Environmental Impact Report (\$110,000)
- Task 5. Provide Assistance with Completing the Energy Plan (\$25,000)
- Task 6. Provide Assistance with Evaluation of Project Contract/Delivery Models (\$10,000)
- Task 7. Provide Assistance with Investigation of Project Funding and Financing Opportunities (\$40,000)
- Task 8. Provide Assistance with Education and Communication (\$90,000)

On November 27, 2012, staff requested approval by City Council of Contract Amendment No. 6, including the scope and budget previously approved by the Task Force. The City Council did not approve the contract but directed staff to return to the Task Force to reconsider the scope of work including the possible elimination of Task 6, and reduction of Tasks 7 and 8 in scope and budget.

On December 19, 2012 the Task Force reconsidered this item and removed Tasks 6 and 7 in their entirety, but requested that staff return at a later meeting(s) to reconsider these two items. In removing Tasks 6 and 7, Task 8 was reduced by \$4,000.

On January 22, 2013 the City Council approved the Amended Contract Amendment No. 6.

DISCUSSION: Tasks 6 and 7 were included in the original scope of work with the financial aspect of the project in mind. Staff continues to support the inclusion of Task 7 for the following

reasons; however, it is staff's intention to return to the Task Force at a future meeting to discuss Task 6 if necessary.

In an effort to reduce the cost of the project realized by the customers, staff requested that Kennedy/Jenks' include Task 7 in their original scope of work. The effort spent here is intended to keep apprised of potential grant and funding opportunities; preparation of federal grant proposals to agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers and the US Bureau of Reclamation; potentially preparing preliminary grant applications (unsolicited grants); and communication and coordination with elected representatives to investigate grant funding opportunities. Beginning this task early could result in reducing the cost of the project for the City and District. And, this financing information could be incorporated into financial models for the City and District to better understand impacts on water rates and customer bills.

As an example, the Department of Water Resources is scheduled to release their 2013 Water Desalination Proposal Solicitation Package in March 2013. This is the third round of Proposition 50 grant funding through the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (California Water Code Section 79500 et seq.) The types of projects being considered include construction projects; feasibility projects; pilot or demonstration projects; and, and research projects.

Staff has contemplated the applicability of this grant opportunity for the **scwd²** Desalination Project. Below are several potential topics within the research category; this category has a "Grant Funding Cap" of \$500,000.

1. Researching technologies to reduce entrainment and impingement impacts. In particular, the State Water Resources Control Board as well as the California Coastal Commission are interested in understanding the benefits of 1mm slot sized screen. The **scwd²** Desalination Project studied a 2mm; West Basin is in the process of studying a 1mm and a 2mm; the Marin project studied a 2mm.
2. Developing a tool for tracking renewable energy and greenhouse gases related to the project for the purposes of reporting.
3. Collaborating with others to further the brine and intake studies currently being conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Some of the issues that may arise for the City and District when applying for grants or other funding opportunity including this one are:

1. Research projects are restricted to the development of information that will address regulatory permitting issues for water desalination projects; they are not to assess a specific project such as the **scwd²** Desalination Project.
2. This particular grant would require some form of cost share, monetary or other. This would require a financial or in-kind services commitment by either the City or District or both agencies which would be in advance of any formal approval of the project.
3. It is possible that the State will not look favorably on awarding grant money for a project that has not yet been approved, although that is less likely for a research project.

In summary, this is a timely example of how funding opportunities arise and it would be very advantageous to be in a position of directing a consultant to obtain the details and a determination as to whether or not the agencies should look into the opportunity further.

FISCAL IMPACT: While Task 7 was initially estimated at not to exceed \$40,000, staff has refined this item with Kennedy/Jenks to not exceed \$30,000. In addition, a grant application, if awarded, could require a commitment of a match; with this current example could be as much as \$250,000.



DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2013

TO: DESALINATION TASK FORCE

FROM: PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: TASK FORCE ROLE, PROGRESS, AND OUTLOOK

RECOMMENDATION: For information only.

Role: The City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek Water District formed a joint Task Force in 2007 to investigate the feasibility of a Seawater Desalination Facility to serve both agencies as a supplemental source of water. At its July 2007 meeting, the Task Force approved an organizational structure and descriptions of responsibilities for the Task Force, Program Managers, Desalination Program Coordinator and Public Outreach Coordinator. (Attached.)

The Task Force role and authority are described in several Agreements.

1. September 2007, “Memorandum of Agreement to Create a Joint Task Force to Pursue the Feasibility of Construction and Operation of a Seawater Desalination Facility.” This Agreement establishes the framework of the Task Force as completing the investigative phase of the project, providing a forum for public input, and formulating a preliminary operation agreement for the project.
2. April 2010, “Agreement Endorsing Recommendations of Joint Task Force on Seawater Desalination Facility.” This futhered the effort of formulating an operation agreement.
3. October 2012, Amendments to both previous agreements. The environmental review process from the point at which the draft Environmental Impact Report (dEIR) is released through certification of the final EIR is described in detail in this amendment.

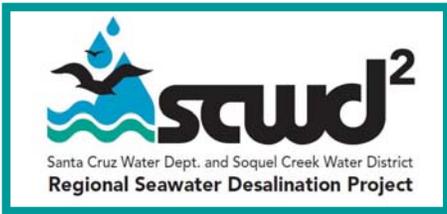
Progress: Since 2008, the Task Force has:

- Overseen the completion of the many studies.
 - Watershed Sanitary Survey, 2008 - 2010
 - Pilot SWRO Desalination Project, 2005 - 2010 (funded in part by \$1.9million grant monies)
 - Intake Studies (Open Ocean Intake Effects Study, Offshore Geophysical Study, Intake Technical Feasibility Study), 2008 – 2011 (funded in part by \$600,000 grant monies)
 - Dilution Analysis for Brine Disposal via Ocean Outfall, 2010

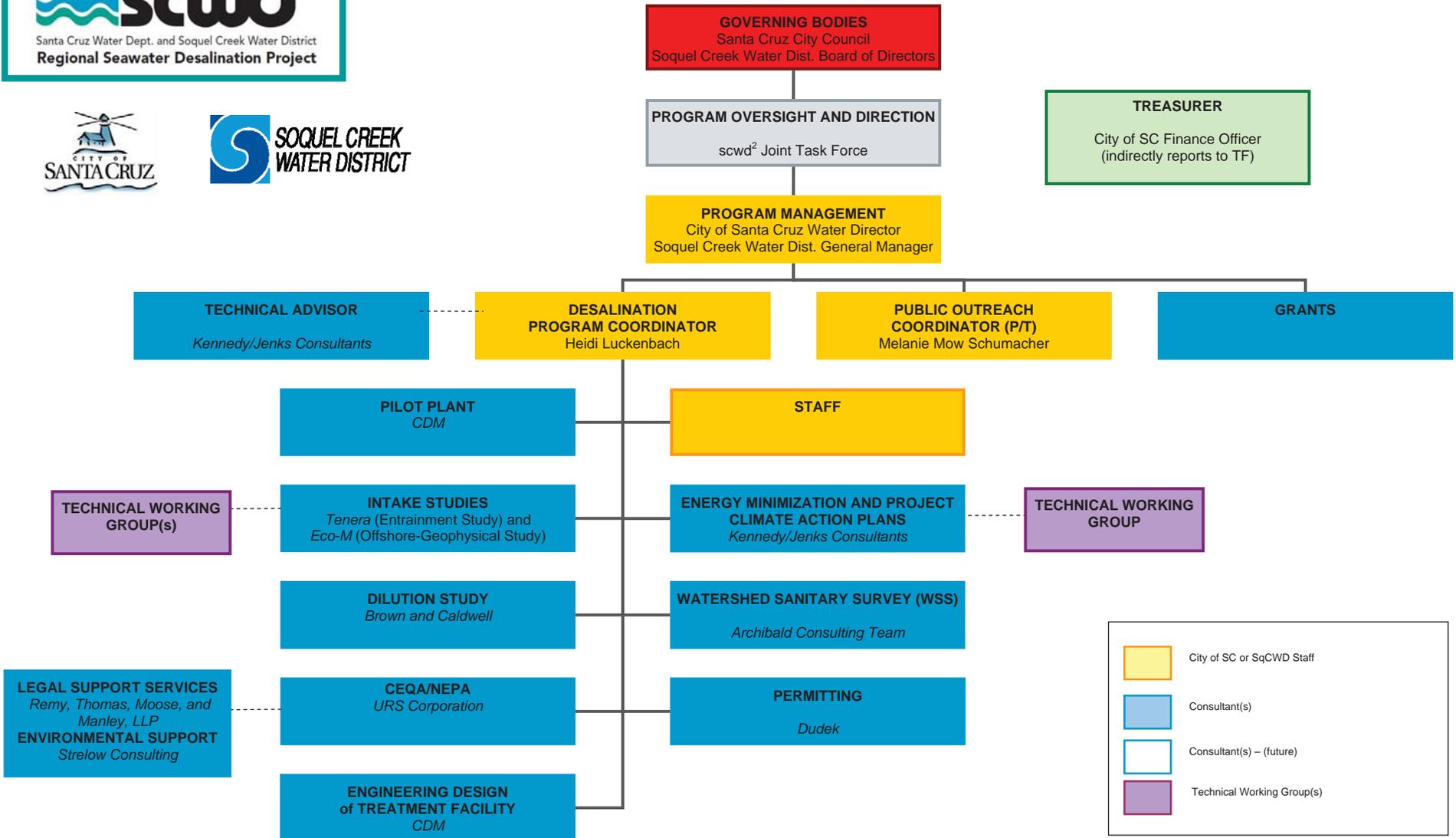
- Study Energy Minimization & Greenhouse Gas Reduction Study, ongoing
- Overseen the outreach and education activities related to the **scwd²** Desalination Program.

Outlook: URS was hired by the City on behalf of **scwd²** to analyze the environmental impacts of the **scwd²** Desalination Project. A scoping period was held in late 2010 to receive input from the community and other stakeholders regarding what they thought the dEIR should include. The dEIR will be released for public and stakeholder review and comment in spring 2013. During the 60-day public comment period, two public meetings will be held to provide information about the project and how to comment on the dEIR. A fEIR may be completed in winter 2013 at which time the City Council and District Board would consider certification. (This latter step is more fully described in Item 3 above.)

Attachment: **scwd²** Desalination Program Organizational Chart



scwd² Desalination Program Organizational Chart



GOOD TIMES

Ebb & Flow: The Desal Debate Evolves

Elizabeth Limbach,
Good Times Weekly, December 12, 2012

With another year of debate and developments behind us—including the fact that desalination will now, ultimately, be up to the voters—what’s really changed in the desal dialogue?

In November, 72 percent of City of Santa Cruz voters said yes to Measure P, effectively amending the City Charter to guarantee voters the right to approve of or reject desalination.

The proposed 2.5 million gallon per day seawater desalination plant could cost \$115 million to bring to fruition and \$3 to \$4 million annually to operate, according to a recent report on desal financing by The Pacific Institute. The plant would be used by the Santa Cruz Water Department to supplement supply in dry years and by Soquel Creek Water District in an effort to lay off of their depleted groundwater basins. The plan (nicknamed scwd2) calls for the plant to be expandable to a 4.5-million gallons per day capacity.

During the campaign, some Measure P critics claimed that the initiative was confusing to voters, who might think they were voting based on their opinion of desalination itself. In response, Measure P proponents stressed that it was solely a “right to vote” issue.

However, now that it has passed, many in the Measure P camp are touting its passage as a rejection of desalination or, in a subtler sense, a hint at what might happen if/when desalination lands on the ballot in a few years. And some of those who originally claimed the measure was misleading voters into voting based on their opinion of desalination have now changed their tune to say that Measure P’s success doesn’t imply anything in regard to public feelings on the issue.

One question lingers: Now that Measure P has passed with a high margin of victory, what does it really mean for the water debate in Santa Cruz?

Unsurprisingly, it depends who you ask.

Its triumph means the onset of a “new water reality,” in the words of SC Desal Alternatives founder and Measure P co-author Rick Longinotti.

“Voters are really asking for something different,” he says. “They are asking for a Plan B, for the alternatives.”

In a Desal Alternatives newsletter emailed to members a few days after the election, Longinotti wrote that “the prospect of voters ultimately approving a desal project seems iffy” because of the victory. Does that mean that voters were voting between the lines, so to speak, when they voted “yes” on a measure that, on its face, simply asked if they wanted to be able to vote on desalination in the future?

“Strictly speaking they were voting on the right to approve it,” Longinotti says. “But I don’t think there would be any argument to the idea that people are interested in alternatives.”

The win implies there is an engaged, interested public that cares about water decisions and is demanding to hear about all possible options, he says.

He sees this turning tide impacting recent city water decisions, such as the Water Commission's Nov. 5 decision to shelve a public outreach and communication plan related to desal and the city council's Nov. 26 move to limit the nature of a contract with desal consultant firm Kennedy/Jenks. The council hesitated over a few items in the up to \$390,000 agreement that they feared were not absolutely necessary to getting the forthcoming desal Draft EIR out. (The most recent ETA for the anticipated report is March 2013.)

As a result, the council decided to send the contract back to the Desal Task Force—comprised of members of the council and representatives from Soquel Creek Water District—for some deletions and restrictions. The tweaked contract will come back to council for approval in January. If they had approved it, Longinotti would have “chalked it up to that it hasn't sunk in yet that we need a Plan B.”

With the possibility that desal could die at the hands of voters, Longinotti also expected a shift in The Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)'s decision on whether or not to approve an application that would allow the City of Santa Cruz to expand water services to UC Santa Cruz's nascent North Campus.

Without a guarantee of “desal in their back pocket,” he didn't think LAFCO could justify granting the application. However, the commission didn't have to make that decision—yet—because a Sixth District Court of Appeals ruled on Nov. 27 that the application's EIR was inadequate.

At the Nov. 26 council meeting, former councilmember and Sustainable Water Coalition member Mike Rotkin urged the council not to read too deeply into Measure P's success. “Some people are attempting to misrepresent the 72 percent [passage],” he said. “People are saying that because it was 72 percent, the public is demonstrating a huge opposition to desalination.” Rather, he said, the vote shows the public's desire for democracy.

City Councilmember Don Lane says he takes Measure P at face value.

“As a city councilmember, all I can do is read what the measure said and take that as what the voters told me,” Lane says. “They said we want you to put this on the ballot. I think to do anything more than that is kind of questionable in terms of the integrity of the voters. All [voters] got to do was read what was on the ballot and say yes or no to that. They didn't have a comment box where they could say what they really meant by voting yes or no.”

Whatever the overall intentions were with the passing of Measure P, the decision of whether or not to move forward with desalination could land in voters' laps as soon as 2014, if the involved agencies give the EIR their stamp of approval.

However, Santa Cruz Water Department Director Bill Kocher is quick to point out that Measure P didn't lead to that change by itself.

Earlier this year, the city council passed an ordinance that promised voters the opportunity to weigh in on construction of a desalination plant. Desal opponents weren't satisfied with the effort (which they feared a future council would overturn), and sought a stricter guarantee via Measure P. (Longinotti dislikes resorting to a vote, which he calls a “crude form of democracy,” but says, “In order to get the city to engage with us, we had to go to Measure P.”)

Kocher says that Measure P, in and of itself, has not slowed down the desal project, but that it would have moved along faster had neither of the efforts to give the decision to voters happened.

“I don't think the Measure P thing changed anything that wasn't already changed,” says Kocher, who is one of around 40,000 people who live outside the city limits but within the city's water

service area, meaning he didn't have the opportunity to vote on the matter. "Absent of a vote, I would have planned to move everything along as expeditiously as possible and see if, in early 2014, we couldn't be going out for design contracts. But we won't be able to do that now."

Kocher was a founding member, and sits on the executive board, of CalDesal, a fairly new organization of water agencies "that were looking at perhaps adding desalination to [their] water portfolio," says Kocher. The group, which has a \$5,000 membership fee, describes itself on its website as "the only advocacy group in California solely dedicated to advancing the use of desalination."

Kocher expects the issue to be voted on locally in either the spring or fall regularly scheduled elections in 2014, but says "either one is a little later than I had hoped for."

PLAN B

The most significant result of Measure P's passage, in Longinotti's eyes, is the opportunity it presents for refocusing on other water supply alternatives. Enter the much talked about "Plan B."

"Even if you're in favor of desalination, you need to admit that it's a fair possibility that the voters could reject it," he says. "You want to have a backup."

He adds, "We have a pause. We have an opportunity. Let's not blow the opportunity. Let's not find ourselves two years from now in the same place, not having made any progress."

Newly seated councilmember Micah Posner personally opposes the desalination plant project, but says that the city's role is now to listen to the people, whom he agrees are demanding back-up plans.

"The council's role at this point in time is to say to the [Water] Department that we know you like the desal option better, but the community wants to see [options] b, c and d," Posner says.

In an effort to protect itself against drought-year water shortages, the City of Santa Cruz, which relies almost entirely on surface water, studied supplemental water supply options over the course of the last few decades. By the time its Integrated Water Plan was adopted in 2005, desalination had been deemed the most feasible supplement and it became one third of the plan (along with conservation and curtailment) that the city would pursue from that point forward.

The ruled out alternatives now sit in what Kocher says is an engineering library "full of Plan Bs."

"Every one of them was compared to desal, and all were found to be inferior," he says. "If this is rejected, we will take one off of the shelf that was previously rejected and start over."

He calls this scenario "The Water Cliff."

"If this thing falls through and we have to start over—wow," says Kocher. "You hear about The Fiscal Cliff. This would be The Water Cliff."

Since the IWP was adopted, the city has seen decreases in demand as well as in supply. In addition to being forced to take less from its depleted groundwater sources, the city is in negotiations with state and federal fishery agencies on a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which will determine how much they need to reduce intake from streams in order to protect endangered fish like steelhead trout and coho salmon.

Although "lord only knows" when the HCP will be finished, in Kocher's words, they do know that they will be losing about a quarter of current production levels to the fish. So far, the agreement is that the city will leave 80 percent of flow in streams in dry and normal years (66 percent of

years). Fisheries are requesting the same amount in dry and critically dry years (the other 33 percent), but Kocher says the city can't agree to this because it would create a 76 percent water shortfall in those years. And so the negotiations trudge onward.

Forget what has defined the desal debate so far, says Kocher—the outcome of the HCP will be the real game changer in the water situation.

“Really and truly, this is all about fisheries now,” he says, adding that he wouldn't push for a desal plant if the HCP weren't in play. “That's because our conservation has been so successful that, absent of losing this water, I would be standing in front of council saying, ‘I don't think you need to build anything. I think we're OK; it'll be a little tight but it's doable.’ [But now] I don't see any other way.”

As it stands, Kocher says desalination remains the selected water supply alternative and that, despite current events, they are not currently planning to reopen previously rejected alternatives in the time between now and a possible vote. However, this could change depending on the outcome of the EIR or if council requests that the Water Department focus on another option, such as inter-district water exchanges—an option that desal opponents prefer.

Meanwhile, the Soquel Creek Water District, which relies solely on groundwater, is facing irreparable seawater intrusion if they do not ward it off by pumping far less water. In the last year, it determined its sustainable yield to be 2,900 acre-feet per year, meaning it will have to pump no more than 2,900 acre feet per year for 20 to 30 years—35 percent less than it does now—in order to effectively rest and replenish their wells, according to Soquel Creek Water District Board President Thomas LaHue. The district is currently working to move its pumping farther from shore to prevent intrusion, replacing old wells with newer ones that function better and are farther inland.

Ron Duncan, conservation manager for Soquel Creek Water District, says that desalination and mandatory curtailments are the avenues being explored to fix the district's pressing problem, but that a water transfer is a welcomed ingredient. While both Soquel Creek and Santa Cruz say they are interested in and open to the idea, both also claim that a transfer would not solve their entire problem.

County Water Resources Division Director John Ricker has been assessing a water transfer between neighboring districts in a Prop. 50-funded study, which he says will be wrapped up in March.

Measure P and the council's earlier decision to send desalination to a vote haven't affected or put more pressure on the study, says Ricker.

Since the December 2011 GT cover story examining the water transfer possibility, the study has progressed with additional modeling, but is still waiting on several moving pieces—chiefly water rights and the outcome of the HCP. However, Ricker says he can already conclude that a water transfer, alone, would not provide enough water to meet either district's need.

“It would be a supplement,” Ricker says. “If there was no desalination plant, there would have to be serious reduction in water use [in addition to a transfer].”

Ricker reports that Santa Cruz would likely be able to give Soquel Creek a few hundred acre-feet per year. It is unclear how much water Soquel Creek would be able to return to Santa Cruz during dry summer months. (Ricker adds that a water transfer could cost \$100 million or more.)

Alongside regional water transfers, desal opponents also favor increased conservation efforts and water neutral development. Kocher points out that conservation is already part of the city's

plan—a baseline conservation study that will report how much conservation potential is left in the city is scheduled to be released in early 2013. However, Water Conservation Manager Toby Goddard has estimated that this figure will be around 200 million gallons.

The city's next wave of conservation goals, and how to achieve them, will be put forth in a new water conservation plan that will replace the one that expired in 2010. On Dec. 3, the Water Commission recommended that the city council approve a contract with Maddaus Water Management for the execution of this plan; the council was expected to consider this at its Dec. 11 meeting, after this article went to press. Although Goddard promised at the Dec. 3 meeting that the plan would "cast a very wide net," the extent of the conservation measures remains to be seen.

Posner, who previously served as director of sustainable transportation organization People Power, has faith that Santa Cruz—of all places—can make serious reductions in water use. He wants to apply the time-tested "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" slogan, and thinks the city could become a better partner in residents' conservation changes. Posner would like to see further replacements of items like showerheads and toilets, adoption of greywater usage for toilets, landscaping, golf courses and washing machines, and more.

Councilmember Lane agrees that Santa Cruz can do more conservation, but disagrees with many desal critics on the amount. All of the low-hanging fruit has been achieved, he says, and now any additional conservation won't have as big of a return.

"The more conservation you've already done, the harder it is to get the next bite," he says. "In the past, people felt it was doable and wanted to do it. But at some point you start pushing people in a way where [they feel] 'wow, that's hard.'"

Down in the Soquel Creek Water District, per capita water usage is already at about half of the state average. Duncan says the district anticipates use to rebound from the current around 4,000 acre-feet to 4,600 acre-feet per year, "even with a strong conservation effort."

Without a supplemental supply, Soquel Creek's LaHue says customers will experience drastic changes in order for the district to meet its 2,900-acre-feet per year target.

"If you don't have a supplemental supply, you have to really do a whole program on mandatory curtailment," he adds. "It'd be no longer voluntary. If you use more than a certain amount, you get a penalty."

He goes on to note that "when we look at an alternative supply, the choice is not desal or nothing. The choice is desal or pretty strict rationing, and water police and whatever else needs to be done. I want everyone to be happy currently, but I also want people 20 years from now to be thankful that we saved the aquifer from saltwater intrusion."

Are locals ready to make big changes in how they use water? Posner thinks so. "I think the people in Santa Cruz are uniquely suited to do that," he says. A desalination plant is simply not in line with the sustainable direction the world is heading, he says.

While it won't be easy, Posner feels real change toward sustainability will be worth it. "It will encourage creativity in every sense, from economic to housing to personal," he says. "When you adapt and evolve, you get smarter. And Santa Cruz is the perfect place to say, 'We weren't going to rely on the last generation's energy ethic. We are going to evolve.' We just have to get together more and work together as a team."

Longinotti agrees. Sticking with the former way of thinking, à la plans for desal, "defers a day of reckoning," he says. "Let's deal with the day of reckoning right now."

And herein lies one facet of the debate that has not changed—or even budged—over the last year: The desalination discussion remains comprised of starkly differing opinions based in deeply rooted and divergent perspectives. Some simply believe locals can and should dramatically alter the amount of water they use and how they use it. Others, including many local officials, see this as overly optimistic. "We rely on tangible evidence," says Kocher. "They rely on wishful thinking."

UP TO THE VOTERS

Should a campaign unfold, it's possible that the anti-desal faction will have a leg up in the race: they've been running some form of a campaign against desalination for several years.

Now that the issue will be up to voters, it raises a sticky question about the boundaries of education and outreach on the part of the involved public agencies. The council's Nov. 26 decision to remove education and outreach components of the Kennedy/Jenks contract (the consulting firm helping with the desal EIR) reflects an awareness that the public wants them to carefully toe the line between providing information and marketing.

Lane, who thinks a vote would be a "close call," says the EIR will play an important role in creating a well-informed voting public. He expects the scenarios it includes, such as the "no project alternative scenario," to put a future without desalination in perspective.

Groups including the Right to Vote on Desal Coalition, Surfers' Environmental Alliance (SEA), Surfrider Foundation Santa Cruz, and Save The Waves Coalition gathered at Mitchell Cove on Sunday, Oct. 7 to show support for Measure P. Photo: Kelly Vander Kaay "It will describe what happens if we proceed with conservation measures we're developing and then have a drought," Lane says. Like LaHue, from Soquel Creek, Lane wants residents to see a vote not as "yes, I like desal" or "no, I don't like desal," but as a vote on whether to proceed with the project or to support the alternative—a future with "serious sacrifices."

"That is a very viable choice—to say we are willing to have less water," he says.

Scwd2's Melanie Schumacher says the EIR will also include a comparison between desal and a package of bundled alternatives.

Lane believes it is important for the EIR to be made as accessible and understandable as possible, as the process requires public comment and response to the public comments. He believes that can be done "without ruffling any feathers."

"In order for the community to have a good discussion about desal, we have to have a good discussion about the environmental impact," says Lane, who is part of the Desal Task Force.

Beyond that, he says the agencies should exercise caution in how they interact with the public.

"There's an important concern that a process like this could lead to [outreach] being marketing or advocacy work," Lane says. "Based on what has happened over the last couple of years, there have been a couple of times when things were put out during the process that touched that line of marketing or advocacy."

He says that the task force will make preventing this a top priority over the coming months, and will hone in on only what's "essential." Still, he feels that whatever level of outreach is done will be perceived as advocacy or marketing by desal opponents.

"Some folks who are dead set against desal will use this opportunity to claim that any public outreach that the task force does is advocacy," Lane says. "That's their propaganda—to claim that any outreach the task force does is propaganda. It's a political game. They're entitled to play it."

If the EIR gets the stamp of approval and heads to a vote, Lane says there will no longer be a place for outreach on the part of the city, except to provide “a body of information that is a complete description of the project.” He says that this could mean one informational event provided by the city.

By the time a vote were to take place, it is likely that all affected voters—not just those in the City of Santa Cruz—will be able to weigh in.

For his part, Longinotti would rather it didn’t go to a vote at all.

“My own personal desire is that we not have a huge conflict over desalination in two years,” Longinotti says. “I don’t think that does the city any good. It would create a lot of division. And it’s perfectly unnecessary. We’ll lose two years of action time where we could be implementing things.”

Instead, he would like to see a broader, non-desal-centered democratic process in which the public is involved in making water policy decisions.

“There is so much problem solving that could happen short of a vote,” he says. “A vote is a win or lose, and people are campaigning, and it’s polarizing. It’s such an unsatisfying way [to accomplish something].”

Longinotti adds that he’d like to see a mediator get involved in mending the fissures in the community caused by desalination. He also says he is planning “stakeholder meetings” for 2013 that will bring residents, restaurateurs, hoteliers, and other businesspeople to the table.

“What if there was a democratic process where you engage people and say, ‘hey folks this is a problem. What do you want to do? Here are some possible directions—do you want to rip out your lawns? That might solve part of the problem,’” Longinotti says. “That way, it is [saying] ‘We’re all adults here.’ It’s not a handful of social engineers trying to make the marionettes move in a certain way. I really don’t see, yet, that thought catching on among, say, the governing board at Soquel Creek or in Santa Cruz.”

He adds, “If the people lead, those who govern will follow.” And with Measure P and the city’s earlier ordinance now in place, they will have no choice.

FOR A RAINY DAY... Curious what sort of impact rain, like the downpour we recently had, has on the city’s water supply? At a Dec. 3 Water Commission meeting, Water Department Director Bill Kocher told the commission that the San Lorenzo River had flowed at 9,000 feet per second over the previous weekend, but that it was down to a 700 feet per second flow that day. Loch Lomond’s levels went from 88.9 percent capacity on Nov. 28 to 98.5 percent capacity on Dec. 3.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE:

County Water Resources Division Director John Ricker’s water transfer study in March 2013

The Desal EIR, also due out in March

The city’s baseline conservation study in early 2013

The city’s in-the-works water conservation plan, which will lay out the next 10 years of conservation efforts.

The Habitat Conservation Plan

Desal task force moves forward on public outreach

By J.M. Brown [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)

Posted: 12/19/2012 09:44:46 PM PST

SANTA CRUZ -- Debate over a desalination consultant's contract extension exposed a splinter Wednesday in the joint planning for a seawater desalination facility.

A nearly \$400,000 extension for the Kennedy-Jenks advisory firm was initially approved Nov. 7 by the desalination task force, which is comprised of two members each of the Santa Cruz City Council and Soquel Creek Water District. The agencies have paid the company \$1.4 million since 2008 to work on the controversial water supply project, which is estimated to cost about \$125 million to continue studying and construct.

But the council on Nov. 27 sent the contract back to the task force, seeking to limit the company's work on education and communication to environmental review. A draft environmental report is expected in March.

District board member Bruce Daniels, who chairs the task force, said the panel's effectiveness is weakened if the council or the district start placing restrictions on their own portions of such contracts.

"The two agencies will rip it apart and we will end up never getting anything done," he said.

Daniels added that he might recommend having future contracts about public outreach be administered through the district, where there has been less vocal opposition to desalination.

City Councilman Don Lane said the task force has to prepare for growing opposition to the facility from city voters and for the council to respond. Voters overwhelmingly approved a measure in November saying they want a future say on building the plant.

"There is more of this in our future," Lane said.

However, Lane said he would try to better anticipate the concerns the council would raise over desalination before the task force approves future plans related to the project.

The task force approved on Wednesday the Kennedy-Jenks firm's continued work on the environmental impact report and agreed to limit its public education and communication work to that review. Outreach materials will be reviewed regularly by task force members to ensure they don't carry a tone of advocacy, rather than education. The firm's work on searching for grant funding and how to build the project will be discussed later.

Critics urged the task force to fund alternatives rather than the facility.

John Aird said he believed the district and city were on "third base" in planning for the plant but the community, as evidenced by the Nov. 6 vote on Measure P, appear to be on "first base."

"What I would be doing is putting money on what the other alternatives are, to have a parallel game here," he said.

District board member Bruce Jaffe said, "We are looking at the options that we have if there is not a desal plant because it's not a sure thing."

Making a dent in desal: Rick Longinotti challenged controversial plant

Posted: 12/22/2012 06:07:07 PM PST

EDITOR'S NOTE: During the final two weeks of 2012, the Sentinel is taking a look back at the most newsworthy stories and newsmakers of the year. The series will be published in ascending order, ending on Dec. 31 with the story selected by the Sentinel staff as the year's biggest.

SANTA CRUZ -- Public safety, economic stability and the homeless remained core issues for Santa Cruz in 2012, but no other topic was more hotly debated as a matter of public policy than desalination.

And no one has been more associated with the movement to reverse the pursuit of a seawater desalting facility than Rick Longinotti, an electrician-turned-therapist. He has become the chief strategist and spokesman for a contingent determined to block desalination as the city's preferred method for battling drought and helping a neighboring district rest its overtapped aquifers.

The 59-year-old Westside resident, who helped draft a successful charter change amendment guaranteeing a future citizen vote on desal, has very publicly taken the City Council and water managers to task for advancing what he sees as an energy-intensive, costly plan that enables growth and contradicts the city's own covenant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For the profound role he and the Santa Cruz Desal Alternatives group he co-founded had in shaping the desalination debate, Longinotti has been chosen by the Sentinel staff as a 2012 newsmaker.

ADDING UP THE IMPACT

There is no doubt the dogged persistence of desalination opponents impacted the project's progress in 2012.

With calls for voter approval of desalination, the council approved an ordinance in February requiring voters to weigh in on the facility in 2014 or later before it could be built. Despite that concession, desalination opponents pressed on with a ballot initiative that became Measure P.

The proposed city charter change amendment passed Nov. 6 with a 72 percent majority. While by no means a definitive read on how voters feel about desalination, it demonstrated Santa Cruzans clearly want to decide the plant's fate -- not the council or state and federal regulators.

Also this year, the Water Department hired a consultant to conduct a baseline survey of current conservation programs to determine what level of water savings -- seen as a key alternative by desalination opponents -- may still be available among its 92,000 customers. Previously, water officials insisted they had reached the end of reasonable conservation in terms of having any meaningful impact on the question of desalination.

And after complaints that previous education campaigns had an advocacy bent rather than basic facts, the council in November turned down the Water Department's request for another consultant to continue working on general public engagement -- restricting the company's work to a highly anticipated environmental report. The council also authorized pursuing regional water transfers when feasible, which has been another big push of Longinotti's even though a county agency leading an initiative has repeatedly said transfers are no substitute for desalination.

A push by desalination opponents also contributed to delays by a local commission considering a proposed UC Santa Cruz water expansion amid calls from federal regulators to reduce

diversions from the San Lorenzo River and North Coast streams to boost fish habitat. The expansion plans have been put on hold after a judge ordered fixes to an environmental review.

Donna Meyers, chair of the city's Water Commission, said she believes Longinotti and fellow Desal Alternatives members have raised the public's awareness of water management, drought and conservation -- a good thing considering the public will get to decide desalination's fate.

But, she said, the way opponents have framed the debate -- as pro-desal or anti-desal -- has created a "contentious political situation" that hasn't been necessarily productive.

The commission is charged with conducting public outreach in the coming year, but Meyers said that until now, "We have lost an opportunity as a community because we are in a perceived fight rather than problem-solving mode."

Longinotti stands by his group's work, but regrets that at times the activism has targeted the city's water management staff.

"We're working hard to develop a tone of advocacy that is not personally critical of people who have been developing the desal idea," he said. "We are not always successful with that tone."

Mayor Hilary Bryant, who took the council's reins Dec. 11, said she will insist on a respectful debate as tension heightens with the environmental report to be released in March. The public will get many opportunities to ask questions and provide recommendations, she said.

"From every aspect, this has to be a debate about facts and choices not the people involved in it," she said. "We have a water supply problem. What do we want to do about it as a community? That's really it."

THE MEANING OF 'P'

Although Longinotti often touts the success of Measure P, he acknowledges he was ready to abandon it after the City Council voted to let the people decide the plant's future. But other desal opponents believed a future council might overturn that ordinance.

"I was ready to say, 'We did our job,'" Longinotti said. "I doubted our ability to gather signatures."

Placing the measure on the November ballot required getting 15 percent of registered city voters -- 5,442 -- to sign a petition, which volunteers and paid signature gathers narrowly succeeded doing. The margin was 82 votes. Out of 8,715 signatures collected, the city clerk verified just 5,524.

But it's debatable what Measure P's passage really means other than people exercised their prerogative to be the final arbiters of desal.

The number of people who cast a vote on the question either way -- 26,513 -- represents 62 percent of the city's registered voters. That is lower than Santa Cruz County's overall turnout rate of 76 percent and 726 fewer votes than were cast for the city's non-controversial hotel tax increase.

And unless signature collectors inaccurately described the petition as a referendum on desalination itself -- there have been no such allegations -- it's difficult to know if people fully understood what they were signing to get it on the ballot.

"It wouldn't have been to our advantage to gather signatures under a different pretext," Longinotti said.

Ironically, Longinotti said he hopes there isn't a future vote. Rather he hopes the council will back away from desalination after a more thorough discussion of alternatives.

In the coming year, Longinotti intends to make his case to businesses, the lodging industry and other groups. He also hopes to engage the city in a mediated dialogue or other ways to work with the public "so we don't live or die at the ballot box or in front of City Council."

IT'S A PHILOSOPHY

Fighting desalination is a philosophical mission for Longinotti.

The San Mateo native and his wife, Aviva, were living in San Francisco with their children, then 4 and 8, when they decided to escape the big city and move to Santa Cruz in 1989.

As an electrician, he tried to make his work environmentally meaningful by encouraging customers to conserve energy. But after attending a workshop on nonviolent communication, he decided to switch his career to marriage and family therapy -- training he believes is relative to the desalination debate.

"Conflicts are based on differing strategies," he said. "If we can find a strategy that satisfies all the needs, that resolves the conflict."

He first learned about the city's desalination plans in 2005 but didn't become engaged until 2009, long after the council had identified desalination as its preferred water supply project.

Mayor Bryant said she wonders what impact it would have had if opponents got engaged earlier in the planning. In 2009, the city was already testing a pilot desal plant at Long Marine Lab.

Regardless, Longinotti is engaged now, subscribing to a philosophy long espoused by former county Supervisor Gary Patton, who successfully limited growth in the 1970s and 1980s and has played a key role in contemporary efforts to halt UC Santa Cruz expansion. Patton's underlying principle is: societies must live within the confines of their natural resources.

Compared to ancient civilizations, Longinotti said, "We are newbies." But, he added, "We are moving out of our adolescence, where we ask, 'How do we live in harmony so nature is not degraded?'"

Biography

RICK LONGINOTTI

WHO: A founder of Santa Cruz Desal Alternatives

AGE: 59

OCCUPATION: Marriage and family therapist, retired electrician

RESIDENCE: Santa Cruz since 1989

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in humanities, Stanford University; master's degree in psychology from Western Institute for Social Research

FAMILY: Wife Aviva, two children

GOOD TIMES

On The Horizon

GT looks ahead at likely key local issues for 2013

Good Times, 1/2/13

The last half of 2012 seemed to revolve around the election. Before that, the year kicked off with the SmartMeter saga still in full swing, and Occupy Santa Cruz stealing headlines. What will be this year's equivalent? For one thing, we will have transportation projects under way (Rail Trail, Highway 1), and continued struggles with unemployment, hunger and other symptoms of a struggling economy. But here are three issues that we suspect will unfold in particularly interesting ways in 2013.

HOMELESSNESS: Although homelessness is a perennial issue in Santa Cruz, community concern about it has peaks and valleys. The latter half of 2012 was one of those peaks: uproar intensified after two homicides in 2012 involved homeless people (the death of a homeless man at the hands of a group of other homeless campers, and the murder of business owner Shannon Collins by a transient). Potential answers to homelessness were discussed at a Creating Smart Solutions to Homelessness Summit, and put into practice with the implementation of the 180/180 project (which pushes for permanent supportive housing), the third annual Project Homeless Connect, and the growth of other, more grassroots efforts, like those by the Association of Faith Communities. In 2013, we'll see what sort of impacts these various efforts are having, but also if any new solutions, perhaps more aimed at the roots, will spring up as a result of the community's plea for change. The 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Survey & Census will certainly shed light (and useful data) on the subject.

CRIME: As GT reported in the Dec. 27 issue, the Santa Cruz Police Department had a record number of calls for service in 2012 (more than 100,000), and crime was up 6 percent in the city. Although robbery, aggravated assault and burglaries were down in 2012, there was a 46 percent increase in auto theft and a 9 percent increase in larceny, according to the department's last Uniform Crime Report.

This year might be when we, as a community, start looking more seriously at the intersections of crime, drug use and homelessness—where they overlap and fuel one another, where they don't, and what could curb the trends. Community action groups, from smaller neighborhood watch efforts to clean-up crews to more vocal entities, like Take Back Santa Cruz, mobilized like never before around these issues in 2012, raising their voices even louder as the year drew to a close. Concerned residents crowded a Dec. 17 Public Safety Committee meeting, as well as previous city council meetings. The momentum is such that we can count on it rolling over into 2013, and perhaps gelling into something tangible being done.

WATER: Thanks to Measure P and the Santa Cruz City Council's earlier move to put desalination in the hands of voters, 2014—when desal could land on a ballot in the spring or fall regularly scheduled elections—might be the big year for the issue. But, in the meantime, 2013 promises to be chock full of new information worth paying

attention to. If the project moves past the Draft EIR and citizens (not just in Santa Cruz, but probably also in all areas that would be affected by the desalination plant) do get to vote on it, 2013 could be the year to really study up on the decision. There are two forthcoming documents, in particular, that could sway things: The first is the scwd2 desalination plant Draft EIR, which is slated to be finished in March (although it wouldn't be surprising if it gets delayed further). The second is the City of Santa Cruz's Habitat Conservation Plan, which will be the culmination of a long negotiation with state and federal fisheries agencies over how much water must be left in local streams in order to protect endangered fish species.

Other water points of interest on the horizon:

1. An in-depth study of potential water transfers between neighboring districts, conducted by County Water Resources Division Director John Ricker, is due to be completed in March.
2. The city's conservation potential will be laid out in its baseline conservation plan, which should be released early this year.
3. The city will embark on its next water conservation plan this year, which will present a roadmap for the next 10 years of conservation.

Thermometer expected to inch up: Forecast shows dry days ahead for Santa Cruz County

[By Shanna McCord Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)

Posted: 01/02/2013 08:23:42 PM PST

SANTA CRUZ -- The next few days ahead will be dry and cold, but not downright freezing like the early mornings have been over the past week.

Beginning Thursday night, the thermometer is expected to creep up to the upper 30s for overnight low temperatures, according to the National Weather Service.

The past week saw some of the coldest nights of the season as the mercury plunged to 31 degrees on Sunday and Wednesday, said meteorologist Will Pi with the National Weather Service in Monterey.

Many people in Santa Cruz County have been waking up to frost on their cars.

"It's going to get warmer starting Thursday night," Pi said. "You'll see three or four degrees."

The frigid temperatures are caused by a shift in the wind direction, Pi said.

Heavy winds from the Gulf of Alaska have hit the Central Coast from the north, instead of the usual onshore winds that come off the ocean, he said.

"The coldest weather happens when the winds come straight out of the north," Pi said. "The ocean's temperatures are around 40 or 50, and the air is a lot more moderated."

Without any rain in the forecast, now might be a good time to get your car washed.

Meteorologists say the rainy weather is behind us for at least the next week and possibly longer -- part of a dry spell typically seen each winter.

Santa Cruz County has seen nearly 14 inches of rain since July, according to the National Weather Service.

A normal year of rainfall, which is measured from July to June, is about 30 inches.

Still, local water officials say they're pleased with the abundant rain the county has seen in recent weeks -- causing flooding and mudslides in some places -- especially after last winter's sparse rainfall.

Bill Kocher, head of the Santa Cruz Water Department, said Loch Lomond, the reservoir used as an alternative water source for the department, is spilling its banks.

A full reservoir is a healthy sign for the area's water supply, he said.

"This is the mother lode of years," Kocher said. "You get years like this or you get years that are awful. This is shaping up as a very, very wet year."

State water officials have reported a snowpack in the Sierra Nevada deeper and wetter than normal.

A recent survey of the snowpack revealed more than 4 feet of soggy snow, with moisture 34 percent above average.

That compares to last year's depth of 0.14 inches -- scarcely more than a few scattered patches.

The crucial reading means the state will be able to deliver at least 40 percent of the supply requested by state water project members this year -- and it expects to give more if winter storms accrue.

The measurements are particularly important because California is entering a fourth year of drought.

The San Jose Mercury News contributed to this story.

Santa Cruz water panel sets minimum reserve level, urges rate study

By J.M. Brown, Santa Cruz Sentinel

Posted: 01/07/2013 09:45:02 PM PST

SANTA CRUZ -- The Santa Cruz Water Commission on Monday took one step closer to drafting a first-ever fiscal policy for how the Water Department will set rate increases to cover future costs and establish reserves.

The panel voted unanimously to develop a policy that sets reserves at a minimum of \$6.7 million to cover 90 days of operational costs and stabilize rates for the \$24 million annual budget in case revenue drops because of shortages in the water supply.

But the panel also asked department officials to bring back in March projections for the impact on rates if the minimum reserve level is set at \$9.7 million, also to create a reserve for maintenance expenses. Staff also will bring back a proposal for commissioners to recommend to the City Council for funding an overall rate study.

The department's top financial officer, Piret Harmon, asked the commission to consider at least a \$9.7 million reserve level, or \$20.7 million as an ideal level, both of which would involve varying rate increases during the next decade. But commissioners were concerned about setting increases of between 5 and 15 percent each year, possibly beginning in 2015, based on the concept of setting reserves versus just covering costs of needed improvements for a system serving 92,000 people.

"I would rather look at a (capital improvement projects) list and gear rates to that," said Commissioner Andy Schiffrin. "I think we need a rate increase but I don't think it will be convincing to the public to increase rates when we want to have a \$9 million or \$20 million reserve."

Although the department's monthly revenue still exceeds its \$2 million in costs, the department has had to tap reserves to pay for capital improvements like the Bay Street Reservoir replacement project. The reserves of \$30 million have been cut to \$25 million in the past six months to cover such costs, and officials would rather not borrow money or tap reserves to cover work needed in the next few years on the North Coast main water transmission line and water treatment plant.

The proposed reserve levels do not include costs associated with a proposed \$123 million desalination project.

Officials say the department needs a financial plan regardless of whether the controversial facility eventually is approved. But if the plant is permitted, it will require borrowing, the rates for which will be improved if the department has greater reserves to cover debt payments, officials said.

Also Monday, the commission approved Water Director Bill Kocher's request to propose the City Council eliminate a rule created after the 1976 drought that terminates water connection to properties abandoned for two years.

An increase in foreclosures in recent years could stick new property owners with reconnection fees of \$6,700. Meanwhile, other property owners have been skirting the rule by opening a connection, paying for a short period, closing their account and then reopening it before the two-year window runs out -- a period during which the department must leave the connection active.

"More people are going to get burned by it," Kocher said. "It's time to say it isn't working, let it go."

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Santa Cruz City Council members raise flags over desal spending

By J.M. Brown [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)

Posted: 01/22/2013 07:36:42 PM PST

SANTA CRUZ -- The Santa Cruz City Council on Tuesday unanimously approved extending the contract of a desalination consultant to complete work on an environmental analysis of the \$125 million water supply proposal.

"I do think at this point we need to be as informational and educational as possible so people can weigh in on this on all sides," Mayor Hilary Bryant said.

Council members Pamela Comstock and Micah Posner failed to get enough support for dropping a controversial public outreach component from the \$336,000 yearlong contract. Desal opponents, who were behind a successful November ballot initiative guaranteeing a future vote on the seawater desalting project, continued Tuesday to question whether ratepayer funds would be used to advocate for -- rather than just educate -- about the plan.

"They just won an election, and they are already telling us they don't believe the information is objective," said Posner, who opposes the project.

Comstock said her initial impulse was to vote against the contract because November's vote on Measure P -- 72 percent in favor -- appeared to show strong community concern. Instead, she suggested revisiting the outreach spending -- set at \$90,000 -- after the long-delayed environmental impact report is published this spring.

"We are this close to getting all the info we need," she said.

In the end, however, Comstock and Posner voted in favor of the extension with Kennedy/Jenks Consultants, a firm the city has already paid \$1.1 million since 2008 for its work on the proposed Westside facility. The contract extension's largest component is assistance with completing the state-mandated environmental study, without which the city attorney said a public vote could not take place.

"To stop spending money would mean we don't have a complete EIR," Councilman Don Lane said. "We don't have enough information the community needs when we get to an election."

Rick Longinotti, founder of Santa Cruz Desal Alternatives, was among several who spoke against the contract, including former Mayor Chris Krohn and outgoing Transportation and Public Works Commission Chairman Ron Pomerantz.

"People don't want their own dollars to be spent to convince them to support a project they don't feel is necessary or they feel there are alternatives to," Longinotti said. "The EIR will

recommend that desal is the preferred option. I don't think any of us expect any outcome other than that."

But Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews, who prior to being elected in November had formed a community group supportive of studying desalination, said alternatives will be laid out in the report and noted that Measure P was not an up-or-down vote on desalination.

"These are exactly the kinds of facts and information both the council and the public are entitled to," she said.

Also Tuesday, the council unanimously approved changes in the city's ban on single-use plastic bags, including an automatic increase in the fee retailers must charge consumers for paper bags -- to 25 cents from 10 cents -- a year after the ordinance goes into effect in April. The changes were made to settle a lawsuit with a group representing bag manufacturers.

Santa Cruz water supply strong for the moment

By Shanna McCord Santa Cruz Sentinel

Posted: 01/30/2013 06:56:28 PM PST



Santa Cruz City Water Conservation Manager Toby Goddard checks the flow of the... (Shmuel Thaler)

SANTA CRUZ -- The heavy December rain gave the area's water supply a major boost, lifting water levels to better than normal and replenishing reservoirs tapped during last year's sparse rainy season.

However, more rain is still needed to comfortably weather the coming dry summer months, Santa Cruz water officials said Wednesday.

"At this time, the water supply outlook for 2013 is pretty good," said Toby Goddard, conservation manager for the Santa Cruz Water Department. "This time last year we called it 'sketchy.' We've made up for last year's deficit."

The winter rainy season started on a strong note in November and December with 13.5 inches falling in those two months.

Normal for those months is about 9 inches.

A normal rain season in Santa Cruz, which stretches from October to September, is roughly 30 inches.

The cumulative runoff so far this winter is about four times more than it was last year, which is a strong indicator of a healthy water supply, Goddard said.

The San Lorenzo River, the city's largest source of drinking water, measured more than three times its normal level in December. The river reached flood stages in some parts during the heavy storms.

Discharge from the river runoff in the past few months is almost as much as all of last year, Goddard said.

The Loch Lomond Reservoir, the water department's emergency supply, is filled to capacity.

The water situation in the Santa Cruz Mountains is even rosier than other areas of the county with the mountain watersheds saturated and streams flowing at high levels that should carry into summer.

For example, the Newell Creek watershed has seen more than 30 inches of rain this season compared to 24 inches in an average year, according to Goddard's report.

Water officials say it's unlikely the department will have to impose mandatory water restrictions this summer like it did last year by asking customers to curtail landscape watering 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Still, there's been a stark difference between rainfall in December and January, which makes water officials cautious about declaring this a "wet season."

Less than 1 inch has fallen in Santa Cruz in January, off from the usual 6 inches typical for this month.

The San Lorenzo River has seen its flow drop to a third of its normal rate in January, Goddard said.

The long-term forecast from the National Weather Service calls for less than normal rain during the next three months.

"It's been a season of contrasts so far," Goddard said. "It is notable that after an early wet beginning it did go dry on us again."

Goddard will present details on the water supply at a Santa Cruz Water Commission meeting at 7 p.m. Monday.

The report is one of three updates the commission receives each rain year.

Another update will be given in February with the final water supply report expected at the end of March.

Soquel district passes water rate increase; dozens protest move, citing insufficient notice

By [Kimberly White](#) [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)

Posted: 02/05/2013 09:14:04 PM PST

CAPITOLA -- Ratepayers with the Soquel Creek Water District will pay an average of 9 percent more each year for their water starting next month, with the average bi-monthly bill going up by about \$21 by 2015.

The Board of Directors unanimously approved the three-year increase after a nearly two-hour public hearing Tuesday. About two dozen spoke out against the proposal, many citing inadequate notice in a notification sent at the height of the holidays, and confusing charts and graphs used to explain the rate changes.

Some also charged they are being penalized for conserving water, which the district encourages but, in a twist of irony, results in fewer funds. Some also took issue with the district's plan to use some of the funding to pay for an environmental impact report related to the controversial desalination plant now being studied by the district and Santa Cruz Water Department.

"I am not in favor of the desal plant," said Soquel resident Joan Vanek, adding the latest increase "is not going to fund desal, but the next one is and it looks like it's going to happen no matter what."

Another Soquel resident, Rama Khalsa, offered up several suggestions, including that the district switch to a monthly billing system, and investigate the possibility of having private well owners pick up some of the costs to maintain the waterworks.

"They are definitely using the water and it doesn't make sense for the rest of us to be paying for all the improvements," she added.

The district provides water to about 38,000 customers, nearly all of them single-family homes.

To prevent the increase from going into effect, a majority of the customers had to turn in written letters of protest by the end of Tuesday's public hearing.

The increase goes into effect March 1 and will raise about \$4.7 million, which will largely be used to pay for about \$25 million in capital improvement projects during the next three years. For example, work started this week on a yearlong project to replace a section of main on Soquel Drive, part of a \$36 million plan to replace 14 to 16 miles of main during the next decade, according to Mike Wilson, the district's associate civil engineer.

Late last year, a new well began operating at the Santa Cruz County Polo Grounds off Soquel Drive, and construction will begin in the summer on another well at the O'Neill Ranch near Anna

Jean Cummings Park. With three other wells slated to be built in the coming years, the district pegs those costs at about \$4.6 million.

Meanwhile, a draft environmental review of the desalination plant is expected to be complete in late spring, according to Melanie Schumacher, the project's public outreach coordinator. The \$1.7 million cost of that study is being split evenly between the district and the Santa Cruz Water Department.

UCSC chancellor discusses community relations, desal and the future at meeting

By Cathy Kelly

Santa Cruz Sentinel, 2/10/13

SCOTTS VALLEY -- UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal spoke of university successes and challenges to higher education in California during a talk Sunday in front of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County.

Blumenthal was the featured speaker at the league's annual Valentine's Day Luncheon, an event which helps fund the group's voter services work. The event was held this year at the Hilton hotel in Scotts Valley.

Answering a question from the audience, Blumenthal said he doesn't believe he will be offered the job as president of the UC system after current president Mark Yudof retires in August.

But he said he believes it is a critical time for good leadership, as higher education is at a critical juncture in California due to changes in funding, demographics, online learning, competition from other countries and new business models.

"The next five years will be crucial; we'll define higher education for years to come," he said. "It's a defining moment."

Blumenthal fielded other questions about the increasing number of non-resident students admitted and the dearth of highly qualified workers able to fill jobs needed in Silicon Valley and elsewhere.

League member Sue Becker asked him to talk about expansion, city water challenges and consideration of a possible desalination plant.

Blumenthal said the UC system is mandated to serve the top 12.5 percent of state students and that UCSC is one of the few campuses in the system that has room to grow.

"In the last few years, we haven't kept up," he said.

He said the city would have water problems in dry years even if the university did not exist. He said UCSC uses 6 percent of the water used in the city and that water use on campus has dropped 22 percent over the past 10 years.

Blumenthal said the university was not driving exploration of desalination.

"It's a legitimate issue," he said. "But in my view, as we grow, we won't use more water. We'll use what we have more efficiently."

Becker, after the meeting, said she had still wonders about water use and growth.

"I'm not sure about all that, but we need the university," she said.

A teacher in the audience, Lisa Dilles, said she sees many benefits from local schools being able to work with UCSC.

Blumenthal mentioned that the university's Cal Teach program encourages science and engineering students to teach.

He voiced a strong opinion about school district funding for the lower grades in California, saying the practice of districts having to give pink slips to teachers in the spring and rescinding them a few months later is something that must be changed.

"That's lunacy, I wouldn't put up with that," he said.

Blumenthal stressed connections between the university and surrounding community and mentioned accomplishments by professors and students, telling the group they should be proud of their neighbors.

Answering a question from former Mayor Emily Reilly, he said UCSC is committed to supporting the arts. He said new Dean of the Arts David Yager has been wonderful and dreams of a creating new community arts institute.

He also said UCSC is a liberal arts university and committed to those disciplines and that he expects a new doctoral program in Latin American and Latino Studies will receive national attention.

He said years of cutbacks to the university's budget remain a problem, but that he is optimistic about the university's future.

Jan Karwin of the League of Women Voters said the event went well.

"It was very informative," she said. "We appreciate all the information about the university."