

#11 - Director' Reports

WM Outreach is Premature (GTR to MPWMD) 1/27/25

This is about the Seaside Groundwater Basin.

The WM was created in 2007 by court order following years of litigation about Cal Am over-drafting, and who has management authority over the Basin. The court ordered the creation of the WM to monitor production and institute control in case of sea water intrusion.

The Basin is a key component of the Peninsula water supply since it is the mixing bowl for all the current new water sources.

I have been the MPWMD rep on the WM Board for 6 years. My earliest advocacy was for the WM to focus on the money needed to help finance solutions. I was always in the minority, and was opposed consistently by the mantra ---when additional new water becomes available (via desal) then the money would come. Thus the history of the WM from 2007 until 2023 was to support Cal Am's desal as the solution, and the money to buy that water would just show up. Like magic. By the way, this Board is the target for financing the desired new water from desal.

Finally in 2023 the Board membership changed, and began to consider the need to bring money to the table. It currently has a consultant evaluating what revenue options look most attractive and doable. Afterwards, WM will ask the Court to grant revenue authority.

I am bringing this to the Board's attention because the WM is considering an outreach campaign to highlight the plight of the Basin. The 'plight' is that it needs more water in the future to help protect its usefulness and value to the entire Peninsula. It's called 'protective water level'.

My opinion is that WM needs to finish its review of revenue options, make a plan, ask the court to approve, and then go public. I believe going public now will only show WM weakness for idling for 20 years., and ignoring the need for revenue. After all Cal Am's desal water will be at a cost.

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My basic reason---a publicity campaign is premature. I fear it will generate a negative image of the agency (ie 'do nothing' agency). It will be controversial, and counterproductive.

My 2nd reason----the optics. The proposed consultant for delivering the outreach message is a current researcher working for Salinas Chamber of Commerce and Monterey Chamber of Commerce. The latter is on record as supporting Cal Am's desal. This too will be controversial and counterproductive.

I plan to attend the next WM meeting tomorrow and make my comments.