

Nipomo voters reject state water

By Joan Halpin
Times Staff Writer

NIPOMO — Voters within the Nipomo Community Services District rejected state water Tuesday in what may have been a successful, last-minute "smear" campaign, according to the district's president David Manriquez.

Ballot Measure C on state water was defeated in an unofficial count of 349 votes against (51.8 percent) to 325 votes in favor (48.2 percent), according to San Luis Obispo County clerk Mitch Cooney. Measure C was an advisory vote that is binding.

Flyers were circulated in the area by the Citizens Planning

Alliance of San Luis Obispo, reportedly distorting some of the facts regarding state water, Manriquez said.

He said the flyer said state water was unreliable and included incorrect information about water costs.

"This kind of sunk our ship," Manriquez said. "It (state water) will promote growth, but we need water."

The alliance could not be reached for comment before press time.

Manriquez said the district will look into more well drilling and a "basket" of other alternatives.

There are about 2,311 registered voters within the district's boundaries that include both

sides of Highway 101, according to county election clerk Bill Zimarik. The district includes Sanddydale Road west of the highway down to Southland St.

The county is entitled to about 25,000 acre-feet of state water, according to county engineer Clint Milne. The coastal branch of the state water aqueduct would run through Devil's Den through San Luis Obispo County to Santa Maria.

In other election news:

■ Residents of Morro Bay voted in favor of Measure A, regarding state water, in an advisory election Tuesday. Residents voted 1,619 in favor of state water (58 percent), and 1,172 votes against, for a percentage of 42.

There will be a binding election on state water Dec. 17.

Residents also voted in favor of studying the water supply of Lake Nacimiento. Residents voted 2,314 for the measure (83.1 percent), and 472 against, for a percentage of 16.9.

■ The Oceano Community Services District filled three four-year seats on its five member board Tuesday. The top three winning candidates include cement finisher Rick Searcy, who received 264 votes, for a percentage of 26; self-employed Liz Kasza, who received 216 votes, for a percentage of 21.3; and incumbent Janet Twitchell who received 208 votes, for a percentage of 20.5.

Residents reject state water by 24 votes

By Cindy Blankenburg

NIPOMO — Voters here went to the polls and refused to turn on the state water tap in the Nipomo Community Services District on Tuesday.

With 99.7 percent of the vote counted, the binding resolution on whether to participate in the state water project failed by 24 votes.

There were not enough disputed votes to change the decision, election officials said.

Official results from the San Luis Obispo County Clerk's Office showed 51.6 of the voters or 349 people didn't want state water.

There were 325 yes votes for 48.1 percent.

There are 2,324 registered voters in NCS D's boundaries. Total votes cast were 676, with 165 of those by absentee ballots and 511 in person.

Meanwhile, voters in Morro Bay were passing state water. The advisory vote had 65.9 percent or 1,619 people vote yes. There were 1,172 people or 41.2 percent voting against the measure. Votes will become final after the county Board of Supervisors certifies them at its next meeting.

"That's too bad," said Steven Small, vice-chairman of the Nipomo

Community Services District. "The people have spoken. If that's what they want, that's what they will get."

The board will have to go back and look at other possibilities, he said. Currently, NCS D is pumping 1,200 acre-feet of water a year. The district may have to pump even more to serve the needs of the projected population growth.

"It's a shame because the pipeline will be passing so close," Small said. "We are missing a grand opportunity."

Small said he hoped state water would give the area an opportunity

to look at alternatives.

"I saw the state water project as a Band-Aid. It could reduce our groundwater pumping and give us a chance to recharge the basin some while we looked for other water sources.

"If state water is offered again, it will never be this low (in price) again."

The vote even surprised those who came out against the water project.

"I am very surprised," said Glenn Peck Sr., who was against state water. "I expected Nipomo to go for it since nobody listens to me. I've

been working for three years to get the word out. I take full credit for the defeat."

As for Morro Bay, Peck said the people there are "plain stupid." They will have to pay for desalination, state water and water from Nacimiento Lake.

"How are they going pay for it?" he asked.

"People who say they're for state water are like people who are on talk shows," Peck said. "They say they don't know a lot about it, but they are in favor of it."

"Anybody who has looked into it (Continued on page 20)