

Woodlands water supply claims

January. The new law mandates that all projects with 500 or more homes have a 20-year water supply verified before the projects can move forward.

It's also the largest single mixed-use project to ever garner county support.

Part of that process is not only verifying water for Woodlands, a 957-acre project off Willow Road that includes 1,320 homes, a 500-room hotel, two golf courses and a business park, but also making sure that existing users and future projects have water.

The Woodlands development will rely solely on the groundwater basin for its supply, which doesn't sit well with the Nipomo Community Services District and Cal Cities Water Co., both of which serve customers on the Mesa.

PH Property, developers of the Woodlands, ar-

gued the Board of Supervisors had verified the water supply when it approved the project's environmental documents in 1998 and again in 2001.

NCSID contends that relying only on groundwater for Woodlands puts existing and future district customers in jeopardy, as well as other users of the basin, and wants a supplemental water source acquired by project developers.

"We think somewhere along the line they boxed themselves in with a sole water source," said Jim Markman, NCSID water counsel. "That's what we object to. (PH Property) is trying to make our customers pay for their supplemental water source."

PH Property plans to appeal the decision to the Board of Supervisors, according to John Janneck, PH Property representative.

County rejects Woodlan

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SAN LUIS OBISPO — After two days worth of testimony and stacks of contrary evidence, the County Planning Commission still can't determine whether the Woodlands development will meet the mandated 20-year water supply.

After wading through stacks of conflicting evidence, last week the commission voted 3-1 to not verify the controversial and long-anticipated mixed-use project's water supply.

Commissioner Wayne Cooper was the lone dissenter, and Commissioner Eugene Melschau, who represents Nipomo, was absent from the board's afternoon session.

Cooper said he was comfortable with relying on figures reported by the Department of Water Resources stating that the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin has ample water to supply Woodlands.

"I liken this to a medical malpractice lawsuit ... where you have an expert on one side from Stanford and one from UCLA (on the other side)," he said about conflicting evidence of the basin's supply and demand. "After listening to all this, I'm going to put my confidence in the (Department of Water Resources). There's enough evidence to verify the water."

The Woodlands project, which has been in the making for the past 15 years, is the first development in the county to have to go through the water verification process since a new law was enacted in