

What is the Waterline Intertie Project?

(NCSD) is proposing to construct a 16" water pipeline from the City of Santa Maria to intertie with the District's existing water distribution system at the corner of Orchard Road and Southland Street. NCSD would initially execute an agreement with the City of Santa Maria for the purchase of up to 3,000 acre feet per year of supplemental water. However, the pipeline could transport as much as 6,300 acre feet per year to keep future land development on the Nipomo Mesa from overpumping the aquifer. The project may also include the construction of a pump station on the south side of the Santa Maria River and storage reservoirs, treatment facilities, and a pump station on the north side of the Santa Maria River. The NCSD has circulated a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the project with the deadline for submission of comments set for August 16, 2006. The NCSD Board of Directors is expected to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report in November 2006 and to select a project for final design in December 2006 or January 2007. Construction of the Project is expected to occur from Fall 2007 through Fall 2008.

Why do we need the project?

Over the past 40 years, groundwater levels in the central area of the Mesa have dropped by over 58 feet as a result of pumping. Current groundwater levels in some areas of the Nipomo Mesa are at or below sea level. These trends will almost certainly continue unless water demand is severely restricted or supplemental water is imported. NCSD is proposing the waterline intertie project to import enough water per year to balance demand from the Nipomo Mesa with available supplies.

What will happen if we don't build it?

The most likely result of ignoring the problem would be salt water intrusion from the Pacific Ocean moving progressively eastward into the Nipomo Mesa. This salt water intrusion could ultimately contaminate the water supplies that we rely on; making them unusable for drinking water consumption and a new supply would need to be developed.

Couldn't we stop Sea Water Intrusion by conserving water resources?

The NCSD is committed to water conservation as the most cost effective "source" of water for our community, however, even if all growth stopped, the levels of conservation required to balance supply and demand would require painfully severe and unrealistic cut-backs in water consumption. This challenge becomes even more formidable as new users are added to the basin through new development.

Will it affect the quality of my drinking water?

Both systems have excellent quality drinking water that meets all federal and state standards. The City of Santa Maria's water supply quality is similar to that delivered by NCSD except that the City uses chloramines instead of sodium hypo-chloride for disinfection and the City adds fluorides for its dental health benefits. The NCSD is evaluating the potential incompatibility between the two disinfection technologies and the options for resolving those conflicts. The NCSD Board of Directors expects to hold a series of workshops to address water quality issues once the nature of the conflict is defined and the options evaluated.

Will the project promote growth?

The project could certainly remove one constraint to growth: however, land use development continues on the Nipomo Mesa in spite of the known water supply deficit. The market has historically favored development on the Mesa and there is a large surplus of relatively inexpensive land that can be developed according to the County's approved Land Use Plans and Zoning.

How much will the project cost?

In 2005, Cannon Associates submitted preliminary cost estimates ranging from \$7.5 million to \$9.5 million depending on the route and construction technology selected for the pipeline. The NCSD has retained Boyle Engineering to refine these estimates and to report on project construction phasing and water quality estimates by November 1, 2006. Following certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report, the Board will select a project for final design and task Boyle Engineering with developing an Engineer's Cost Estimate prior to advertising for competitive bids.

How will the Construction Cost be funded?

The NCSD has approximately \$2 million set aside for this project from Certificates of Participation and accumulated capacity fees paid by development. The NCSD may borrow the balance not covered by the certificates and fees from either the State, in the form of a low interest loan, or from the municipal bond market. If the District does borrow money to fund construction, capacity fees on development are expected to be the principal source of repayment for the debt service on the borrowing. The complete source of funding cannot be determined until we have a more accurate cost estimate.

How much will new development pay and will big development pay up front?

All new services inside NCSD will pay the Capacity Fee described above prior to the District setting their water meter. Properties outside of the District that wish to annex must pay the Capacity Fee and pay for reservation of supplemental water from the City of Santa Maria. Properties outside of NCSD's Sphere of Influence will pay a County imposed "In-Lieu Fee" of up to \$13,200 to offset their share of the cost of importing water to the Nipomo Mesa. Although some developers have offered to pay a portion of the cost of constructing the Project, the NCSD has not executed any agreements with any third party to pre-pay their capacity fees.

How much will the project cost the average water user?

The NCSD Board of Directors has committed to answering this question in Winter/Spring 2007 as soon as it has more information on the cost of the project and the contributions from the other major purveyors. The Board expects to hold a series of workshops with ample public notice so that all residents will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the funding issues.

When will the project happen? Will it be built all at once?

The current schedule calls for construction of the selected project in the one year period from Fall 2007 through Fall 2008 assuming that the Board of Directors can select a project in December 2007 or January 2008. The Board will probably agree to initially build a full capacity pipeline (6,300 AFY) to avoid the necessity for a second pipeline to be built later; however, it will consider phasing the amount of storage and the capacity of the pumping facilities to defer expenses that are not necessary now.

Where would the project start/end? What routes have been considered?

The City of Santa Maria wants NCSD to access the supplemental water at the north end of Blosser Road. The southern end of the District's current water system is at the corner of Orchard Road and Southland Street. The District Board of Directors is considering three different pipeline routes:

A river crossing northerly from Blosser Road up to Orchard Road (the Direct Crossing); a river crossing just west of the Highway 101 bridge and then up Hutton Road and Joshua Road to Orchard Road; and a pipeline suspended from the Highway 101 Bridge and then up Hutton Road and Joshua Road to Orchard Road. Both the crossing immediately west of the Highway 101 Bridge and the routing involving suspension from the Highway 101 Bridge involve almost twice the length of pipeline since they require the construction of additional pipe along the levee. They would also have much greater environmental impacts, crossing Nipomo Creek.

Will our roads be torn up?

It is possible that the District would disrupt traffic on Orchard Road if the direct river crossing route is chosen. If either the river crossing adjacent to the Highway 101 Bridge or the option of suspending the pipeline from the Highway 101 Bridge is chosen, then the construction could disrupt Hutton Road, Joshua Road, and Orchard Road. Further, Blosser Road will be disrupted during Santa Maria's expansion of its water line.

What about other possible environmental impacts?

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential impacts of all three routes on the full range of environmental concerns. As detailed in the DEIR, the biggest concern is Growth Inducement; however, the potential crossing of Nipomo Creek in the two Easterly Pipeline Routings could also pose potentially significant adverse environmental impacts in regards to biological resources. It is interesting to note that the "No Project" alternative is deemed to have the significant adverse environmental impact of not reversing salt water intrusion.

Why don't we just connect to State Water?

The District's voters in the 1990s voted twice to prohibit NCSD from connecting to the State Water Project. In addition, the capacity of the pipeline is fully committed to the project participants in Santa Barbara County.

Why is NCSD the Lead Agency?

The District is proposing to construct the project because it believes that it is in the best position to solve this serious problem in the most responsible possible manner.

Why can't the Woodlands, Golden State, and Rural Water Company get their own water?

The environmental impacts of two or more pipelines crossing the river would be greater than one pipeline. Additionally, the District expects that the financial contribution from Woodlands and the other two purveyors will offset their share of the cost of the proposed pipeline.

What process will NCSD use to finalize the project?

The NCSD Board of Directors will use a very open process with a maximum of public involvement regarding certification of the Final EIR, selection of the project to be designed, and selection of the funding to pay for the project. The Board has tentatively set two dates for Certification of the Final EIR – November 8 and November 22, 2006 starting at 9 am at the NCSD District Office. The Board will discuss options for resolving Water Quality conflicts at its September 13, 2006 Board Meeting (9 am at the NCSD) and it has tentatively scheduled two dates for selection of the project – December 13 and December 27, 2006 starting at 9am at the NCSD District Office. The Board is expected to discuss funding issues in Winter and Spring 2007 prior to opening bids for project construction.

How can I stay informed?

The most direct way to track the project is to call the District's Project Administrator, Bruce Buel at 805-929-1133. You can also e-mail Bruce Buel at bbuel@nipomocsd.com or stop by the office at 148 South Wilson. Constituents are welcome to attend the semi-monthly Board Meetings that are scheduled for the second and fourth Wednesday at 9 am at the NCSD Office or the District's Waterline Intertie Project Design and Construction Committee on the third Wednesday at 10 am at the NCSD Office. Periodic reports and other support documents are available online at the NCSD website: www.nipomocsd.com.

