

Getting facts on water use

I wanted to correct some misinformation that appeared in a "Looking Forward" opinion column by Joan Leon, published in the July 6 edition of the Santa Maria Times.

An acre-foot of water is about 325,000 gallons, not about 425,000 gallons.

An acre-foot of water is about enough water for two families of four for a year, not one family of four for a year.

The city has a state water allocation of 17,820 acre-feet, not 17,280 acre feet.

The court awarded the city 14,300 acre-feet per year of groundwater from the Twitchell Project. This was based on a long-term average. Some years, more is stored in the basin. Some years, less is stored in the basin.

The letter of intent with North Hills calls for the city to commit to as much as 4,500 acre-feet of water for 30 years, at the cost of \$25,200 per acre-foot, not \$25,200 per-acre foot for a single year. If Ms. Leon's figures were correct, the sale of water to North Hills would generate over \$113 million per year to the city.

The city general fund owns the groundwater rights. Funds derived from groundwater allocation sales are not removed from the water fund because they are owned by the general fund and therefore were never in the water fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify that opinion column with these facts.

Richard Sweet

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