



## SLO County to study assessments for pipeline

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San Luis Obispo County will evaluate the feasibility of forming a joint powers assessment district to pay for constructing a supplemental water pipeline from Santa Maria to the Nipomo Mesa.

Under a reimbursement agreement unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors last week, the county will hire a consultant to conduct the study, but the costs will be paid by Nipomo Community Services District.

Those costs are estimated at \$25,000. NCSO will provide an initial \$10,000 payment to get the process moving, said Will Clemens, administrator for the County Department of Public Works.

Then the district will be billed for the work as the costs come in.

"There is no maximum to the agreement, so whatever it costs it costs, and NCSO is on the hook for payment," Clemens said.

NCSO also will be responsible for the costs of issuing bonds if an assessment district is formed and the cost of administering the annual assessments, he said.

Most recent estimates put the cost of building the pipeline and related systems at \$23 million.

Nipomo Mesa water purveyors were directed to develop supplemental water sources by a Santa Clara County Superior Court judge who presided over the settlement in a lawsuit over pumping rights in the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin, which extends from Santa Maria to the Five Cities area.

NCSO has the power to create its own assessment district to pay for a supplemental water pipeline, but private water companies that will be involved don't have that authority, Clemens said.

So NCSO asked the county to investigate the possibility of forming a district that would include the Woodlands Mutual Water Co., Golden State Water Co. and Rural Water Co., which provide water to customers outside NCSO boundaries.

"This joint cooperative approach is consistent with the San Luis Obispo County integrated regional water management plan, and it's also consistent with the physical solutions identified in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin litigation," Clemens told supervisors.

Woodlands Mutual Water Co., Golden State Water Co. and Rural Water Co. would be expected to pay 13.9, 6.9 and 6.9 percent of the construction costs, respectively.

The project would be built in two phases, with the first phase delivering up to 3,000 acre-feet of water per year and the second phase capable of delivering an additional 3,200 acre-feet a year.

An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, or the amount of water generally considered to supply the annual needs of four to 10 people in an urban environment.

The first phase delivery is designed to offset about 2,500 acre-feet of the water being pumped from groundwater and provide 500 acre-feet for future customers on currently vacant land within NCSO boundaries.