



## NCSO water plan expensive, unnecessary

**Bob Blair/Guest Commentary | Posted: Saturday, July 30, 2011 12:00 am**

Nipomo's water ratepayers are about to be bombarded with a series of conflicting facts about water supply.

The Nipomo Community Service District (NCSO) recently sent all residents in the South County an expensive color brochure paid for by ratepayers. This brochure informs residents they have only one source of groundwater, and threatens that the current water supply is subject to overdraft and seawater intrusion.

In 2004, the Department of Water Resources issued a hydrologist's report that concluded, "There is no evidence of overdraft or seawater intrusion in the main Santa Maria Basin ..."

In 2008, at the close of the lawsuit involving NCSO, the city of Santa Maria and other pumpers, a Santa Clara Superior Court judge ruled there was no overdraft or evidence of seawater intrusion.

During the trial, NCSO's appointed hydrologist further stated that the Santa Maria-Nipomo water basin will stay healthy through 2030.

The court also put in place a series of safeguards and three technical advisory commissions from the region. The groups meet monthly and write yearly reports. To date, none has found any issues with the basin.

All three commissions have authority to take whatever action is needed, should the slightest sign of overdraft or seawater intrusion ever occur. If the commissions fail to act, the judge can take charge and issue a court-ordered solution.

Coastal and inland monitoring wells operate from Santa Maria to the Five Cities area. These wells are regularly checked by SLO County and other appointed stakeholders. Only once was a negative report filed. The discrepancy was attributed to a failed well casing and outside contaminants. This well was cleaned up and all subsequent reports are normal with no evidence of contamination.

Last month, the Twitchell Management Authority (TMA), hosted by Scalmanini Consulting Engineers, filed a report. Scalmanini concluded no overdraft and no sign of seawater intrusion.

Scalmanini and the TMA went on to state the Santa Maria Water Basin is divided into three basic sections, and water quality may vary from section to

section.

To the South are the Sisquoc, central in Santa Maria, and the northwest at Oso Flaco sections. Oso Flaco is purported to have the best water quality in the entire Santa Maria-Nipomo basin.

The Rural Water, Monarch Dunes, Golden State and NCSO customers will be incorporated into the large area assessment district proposed by NCSO. The proposal is to bring water from Santa Maria to have an alternate source of water in case of overdraft or saltwater intrusion. This \$400 million-plus project will be voted on by property owners of all four water companies. Only NCSO customers will receive any of the water, but all four water company customers will be expected to pay the total bill for the supplemental water.

As now proposed, only NCSO customers will elect the five NCSO directors, who will make all the water policy rules and collect the excessive amounts of money needed to purchase the alternate water from Santa Maria. None of the customers of any of the other water companies — who will pay for this project — will be allowed to vote on any part of this proposal.

The city of Santa Maria will become very rich selling water to South County residents, who will take on an enormous tax debt load. South County residents will pay dearly for water that flows north to them normally underground in the basin. What you end up with is one area out of the four receiving water, and all the rest of the Mesa paying for it.

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