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**CITIZEN COMMENTARY**

**Mesa group has facts about pipeline**

*By Mesa Community Alliance members*

Nipomo Community Services District is trying to scare Nipomo Mesa residents about the state of the Mesa water supply. In so doing, NCSD has deliberately contradicted the reports of a court-appointed technical committee that tells us our water supply is not in jeopardy.

The district has hired a costly public relations firm, sent out multiple glossy brochures and conducted telephone surveys — using our money — to convince Mesa residents we are experiencing a water shortage and facing imminent danger of saltwater intrusion. Why? So Mesa residents will vote to support a 30-year property tax assessment for a water pipeline from Santa Maria.

NCSD has begun this public relations campaign after already spending our dollars on pipeline design and permits and signing a memorandum of understanding with Santa Maria for water delivery. The district and other Mesa water providers are manipulating the facts for their own benefit. More water leads to more development and, therefore, more customers. In the case of the two private water companies, unavoidable higher rates for water equal more profit.

Mesa Community Alliance is a group of your fellow Mesa residents with the expertise to study and evaluate the health of our water supply and the proposed pipeline project. Unlike NCSD, MCA has no agenda and will receive no benefit from opposing the pipeline. But MCA has done its homework and can prove that:

- > Our aquifer is not currently at risk from saltwater intrusion or a lack of supply.
- > While the Mesa does have only one source of water and future planning is needed, we have time to do it right.
- > The pipeline will not add any new water to our aquifer; it merely moves water to the Mesa that normally flows here anyway.
- > The total cost of this project will exceed \$350 million over 30 years and consume funds needed for real supplemental water alternatives.

NCSD is not telling the whole story when it presents the cost of its proposed pipeline. It only talks about construction costs, but it does not include the costs of the bond issue to raise the money to build it, the mandatory annual payments to Santa Maria for water whether it is needed or used or not, nor the costs of operating and maintaining the pipeline.

No, NCSD is not telling Mesa residents the truth about our water supply and the cost of its proposal. MCA will — and we can provide the documentation to prove it. Please attend the MCA public meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8, in St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 298 S. Thompson Ave., Nipomo.

The path NCSD wants Mesa residents to walk will increase property taxes, increase water bills and saddle residents with a 30-year debt to "solve" a problem that doesn't exist. Join us Thursday. We will answer your questions and listen to your concerns.

This guest commentary was jointly written by Pat Eby, Vince McCarthy, Bill Dorland, Bill Petrick, Reggie Dion, Larry Versaw and Liam Bennett, founding members of MCA.