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LOCAL NEWS

Opponents question NCSD's data

By Mike Hodgson/Associate Editor

Nipomo citizens who attended the Nov. 9 town hall meeting about the proposed supplemental water pipeline questioned not only the need for the project but also the methods for funding it.

Many of their questions echoed those raised by members of the Mesa Community Alliance, a group of residents who oppose the project, several of whom spoke at the meeting.

Following the meeting, MCA members said Nipomo Community Services District representatives offered nothing new and are still using false facts and misinterpreting data to justify the

project.

"It was certainly polished," MCA member Bill Petrick said of the presentation. "I guess they're getting their money's worth from their public relations firm.

"Unfortunately, they're still resorting to made-up facts and deception on the need for the thing."

Petrick said a chart used in the presentation showing groundwater levels compared to rainfall totals "is not really what the (Nipomo Mesa Management Area) technical group came up with."

"What (they) didn't show was the 35-year graph and the cyclical nature" of the rainfall and groundwater levels, he said.

He also questioned the district's assertion the water to be purchased from Santa Maria would be a new source of water from outside the area.

"It's from the same basin, so it's not new water," Petrick said. "By any measure, we still have one source of water, and that's the aquifer."

He also said for Santa Maria to meet the 2,000 acre-feet the district plans to buy, the city will have to pump water from the aquifer, so it won't be state water as NCSD claims.

He also said NCSD's numbers for the monthly water costs don't match the numbers MCA has come up with using the same data and don't account for the construction costs over the 30-year life of the bonds.

MCA member Pat Eby, no relation to NCSO Director Ed Eby, also cited the costs and questioned the district's data on the water supply.

"NCSO is lying about our water shortage," she said. "They are not even consistent in what they say. Ed Eby says we are using 50 percent more water, and (Director) Mike Winn says we have reduced our water use by 20 percent through conservation. What's up with that?"

She also echoed a comment made by an unidentified speaker at the public forum that a private individual in Nipomo paid for state water rights and has a tap in the pipeline.

"All it needs is a meter, pumping station and pipes to connect to NCSO's system," Pat Eby said. "It's the very same water that would be pumped back to us at a cost of more than \$300 million."

During the public comment portion of the forum, former 10-year NCSO Director Bob Blair asked why the cost had ballooned from \$6 million in 2004 to \$400 million today.

He claimed a 200-million-acre lake exists under the Oso Flaco Lake area that NCSO should tap into for more water.

John Snyder, another vocal opponent of the pipeline project, also questioned the district's statistics during the forum.

"It's odd they claim we're 6,000 acre-feet short, but they're only bringing in 3,000 acre-feet," Snyder said. "So they're underestimating the cost by one-third or overestimating the need."

Snyder said the district owns well sites in the Santa Maria Valley that could provide water until a desalination plant can be built.