

Coalition for the Public's Right to Vote about Desalination

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the issue?

The Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) is planning to build a desalination plant on San Francisco Bay that will cost the public over \$400 million. This unnecessary desalination plant will double the District's energy use, raise our rates, pollute the Bay, and promote growth and development in Marin County. In addition, the desalinated water could be laced with pharmaceuticals, hormones, pesticides, heavy metals, and other contaminants that are impossible to filter.

Because of these severe consequences, the Coalition for the Public's Right to Vote about Desalination is collecting signatures in order to place a ballot measure for this November's election. The measure would require the district to hold a vote of the public before it builds a desalination plant.

Why should the public have the right to vote about desalination?

Because the public will have to pay for desalination and its negative consequences, the public should get to vote. From the growth it will induce to the contamination of our drinking water, desalination will have a major impact on Marin County. In addition, the Marin public has been able to vote on major water supply projects such as the Russian River pipeline and Alpine Reservoir. Desalination is no different, and in many ways, much worse.

Who is part of the Coalition?

This campaign was formed by Marin residents and includes support from the Surfrider Foundation, Food & Water Watch, Marin United Taxpayers Association, Marin Water Coalition and dozens of concerned citizens.

Don't we need more water?

Marin has a very reliable supply of water. In the last 15-20 years, we have actually decreased our water use despite population growth. Fortunately, we have many opportunities to make our water use more efficient and reduce consumption. Some of these opportunities include efficient outdoor irrigation systems, water-saving toilets and washing machines, grey water, and rain catchment systems.

The MMWD Board members are exaggerating the need for water in order to justify desalination.

What about Climate Change? Won't it bring more droughts?

Climate Change does not create uniformly dry weather and Marin's weather will vary from other parts of California such as the Sierras. A recent United Nations Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change Report (Section 11, page 890, December, 2008) predicts that the North Coast, including Marin County, may have winters that average 5% wetter than in the past.

If a drought were to occur, like the one of 1976-77, Marin would implement a rationing policy that would ensure a reliable supply of water. In addition, Marin now has significantly greater sources of water than it did then.

I read that the Desal plant costs \$105 million-why do you say it will cost \$400 million?

The \$105-\$150 million construction cost of the desalination plant will be paid for with bonds that will require repayment with interest. Once you add the annual operating costs of the desalination plant, the plant will cost ratepayers over \$400 million over a 30-year period. MMWD is only using the construction cost, which itself is a low estimate.

I read that the Desal plant will be powered by Clean Energy/Marin Energy Authority-isn't that a good thing?

1. MMWD is now the largest user of electricity in Marin County. If Marin gets clean energy it should be used to power existing operations, not wasted on an unnecessary desalination plant, which would double the District's energy use.
2. The massive additional amount of electricity that would be needed for a desal plant would, if it came from clean energy, gobble up available clean power, thereby raising the costs of such clean power for Marin residents.

How can I help out with your campaign?

Call Loren Moore at 415-381-5369 or Bill Rothman at 415-435-1096.