

The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved the proposals for construction of a Regional Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment Facility at the County Landfill North of Marina. It was a prolonged and arduous task for all. The PUC decision of December 2, 2010 was a major step in the process. However, approvals are still needed from several other agencies including the California Coastal Commission. It remains a controversial project. The problems most frequently mentioned are dramatic increases in the cost of water; and the fact that the Regional Plant will only replace the excess amounts pumped from the Carmel River (approximately 10,300 plus 2,900 acre feet per year for Seaside Basin replenishment) with no surplus water for additional water hookups. The five members of the PUC added their voices to officials who have previously said that while the plans for the Regional Facility are imperfect, it is the only project on the horizon that promises to redress, without draconian water rationing, the persistent problem of pumping too much water from the Carmel River.

Meantime, two private corporations, Calera and Desal America, doing business as Moss Landing Water, announced in late 2010 that they are preparing a proposal to build a deep seawater desalinization plant at Moss Landing capable of producing up to 10,000 acre feet per year. Projected costs for the plant would be in the \$40 to \$60 million range. Spokespeople say that only a few years

would be needed to build the plant. Much of what is needed for the plant, including the deep water of the Monterey Submarine Canyon are present at Moss Landing. An advisory board of experts is being formed. The private corporations plan to sell their product to water-short agencies in the area such as the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District. Proponents claim that greater efficiency with the deep seawater desalination method would enable the Moss Landing plant to sell their water at a much cheaper price than is projected for the Regional Reverse Osmosis Desalination plant. Product water would cost about \$1,200 per acre-foot, backers estimate, compared to as much as \$7,900 for the desalination plant just approved.

To this writer, it is an interesting prospect, and it might help with the issue of no surplus water for additional water hookups. However, if the publicly owned regional plant has had to gain the approvals of so many governmental agencies, one must wonder what hoops the private corporations would have to jump through to get all of the approvals needed for their proposed project. While the “deep water” plant is not a substitute for the Regional reverse osmosis plant It would be an important addition. It is thus my personal opinion that jumping thru the hoops- no matter how onerous- would be worth it with the lucrative goals of more water to distribute at a lower cost and perhaps a faster timetable-all good for our community.