

Community Water Coalition Undercuts Crucial Collaborative Water Agreement

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Over the past three years, Metro Water has been partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Cortaro-Marana Irrigation District (CMID), and Pima County staff in an effort to utilize and expand effluent use to reduce groundwater pumping through a mutually beneficial agreement. Effluent is treated wastewater that is often stored underground as a long-term future water resource. Unfortunately, the Community Water Coalition (Coalition), a group of local environmental interests, lobbied the Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to change the agreement that had already been approved and coordinated with the other parties resulting in an estimated \$200,000 annual loss in potential revenue and water resources for our ratepayers.

To provide background on how the Coalition was able to undercut this agreement, it is important to note that while Metro generates approximately 4,000 acre-feet in effluent annually, the majority is obligated for potential environmental uses and previous water rights settlements. An acre-foot is roughly equivalent to one foot of water covering a football field. Presently, Metro’s effluent from Pima County’s Tres Rios Water Reclamation Facility is discharged into the Santa Cruz River but Metro only receives credit from the State of Arizona for roughly a third of the actual water that recharges beneath the Santa Cruz River. As these water resource credits have significant value as a future water supply, the District has been working for many years on an agreement to enhance the amount of water resource credits that can be generated.

The proposed agreement was to take a portion of Metro’s effluent that is discharged into the Santa Cruz River and deliver it instead to the CMID farmlands. This results in a mutual benefit as Metro would receive 100% water resource credits for effluent placed on the farmlands and CMID would pump less groundwater to meet agricultural needs. Reclamation joined in this arrangement as a 50/50 cost-share partner. The total amount of water to be delivered to CMID was planned to be approximately 2,200 acre-feet. Reclamation has effluent rights to over 28,000 acre-feet annually, so the actual amount proposed to be delivered to the farmlands was a relatively small.

During the over three years of coordination, a pilot test was performed to ensure the feasibility of the project, engineering designs were completed, permits were issued and a lengthy environmental assessment was accomplished that determined the project would not significantly impact the Santa Cruz River environment.

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PLEASE NOTE: Metro Water staff will never go to your home to collect or demand payment. In addition, staff will always wear the Metro Water logo and drive a marked Metro Water vehicle when working in the field. If you see anyone claiming to be Metro Water staff asking to collect payment, please call 520-575-8100.



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In October 2016, the Pima County Administrator provided a staff recommendation to the BOS that this project should be approved because “this effort conserves groundwater and meets the regional goal of increasing beneficial use of effluent and is an increasingly important means to augment regional water supplies.”

Unfortunately, the Coalition stated their objections to the BOS due to their concerns of removing any water from the Santa Cruz River, including water that belongs to Metro. As a result, the BOS delayed action while the Coalition’s environmental concerns were considered.

Metro staff met with the Coalition in an effort to address misconceptions about the project and Metro’s water resources program. While the Coalition ultimately appeared to understand the benefits of the project and submitted a letter of support to the BOS, the Coalition’s letter included proposed restrictions on Metro’s legal effluent rights, which caused the BOS to modify the agreement. This modification made the project financially infeasible for Metro. As a result, the agreement to enable Metro to use a portion of its effluent water resources, that had been transparently coordinated and vetted to have no significant environmental impact, was undercut by the Coalition’s environmental activism.

At the January 2017 Metro Board meeting, Board member Dan M. Offret succinctly highlighted the impacts of this action by stating that what has really happened, if you place a price tag on the value of this water resource, is take away approximately \$200,000 a year in revenue from 50,000 Metro Water residents who are also Pima County taxpayers.

While Metro staff will continue to pursue options to use our effluent resources to the fullest extent, we wanted to ensure our ratepayers knew how the Community Water Coalition undercut a collaborative water agreement that would have enhanced Metro’s long-term water resources during an era of on-going drought. ♦

Water Quality Update



Metro Water District regularly checks its water for contaminants. Metro Water staff also tracks water quality regulations, as they change from time to time. The District is required by federal and state regulations to test for 166 constituents. Staff collects water samples from wells, storage facilities, points in the distribution system, and at residents’ homes. The samples are then taken to state licensed laboratories for analysis. Annually, a water quality report (also known as a Consumer Confidence Report or CCR) is sent to all residents within the District per EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Act. 2016 water quality reports will be sent to District consumers in May 2017. ♦

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Metro Southwest Spotlight



The Metro Southwest Lazy B well has been pulled for service on the well and pumping equipment. As part of the maintenance service, a video of the well was taken. In this photo, a video image of the well piping shows that the casing has deteriorated and folded inward. The well casing’s function is to maintain the well hole by holding back the soil and allowing access to the water below ground. The District is working on options to repair the well casing to maintain the operation of this well. Water is presently being delivered to customers in the Lazy B area through a Tucson Water wheeling agreement. ♦

Press Release from U.S. Senator Jeff Flake, February 1, 2017

Flake Named Chairman of Water and Power Subcommittee Expresses commitment to use subcommittee to advance Arizona water priorities

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) was selected to serve as Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power.

The subcommittee under Chairman Flake is responsible for irrigation, reclamation projects, power marketing administrations including Western Area Power (WAPA), energy development impacts on water resources, groundwater resources and management, hydroelectric power, low head hydro, and energy related aspects of deepwater ports.

“I look forward to using this chairmanship to improve stewardship of Arizona’s water and energy resources,” said Flake. “Whether it’s strengthening oversight at WAPA, protecting Arizona’s voluntary water contributions to Lake Mead, or taking proactive steps to prevent a drought declaration in Arizona, I will actively work with my colleagues on the Water and Power Subcommittee to hold federal agencies accountable.” ♣



Photo: John Kmiec, Director of Marana Water, U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-Arizona), Joseph Olsen, General Manager of Metro Water District, and Tim Thomure, Director of Tucson Water gather at the Central Arizona Project Twin Peaks Pumping Plant



Plant Selection with Conservation in Mind

Spring is when many of us like to spend time redesigning outdoor landscapes and creating inviting spaces by replacing old plants or purchasing new plants. The types of plants we choose can make a big difference in whether we end up with a water efficient, low maintenance landscape or one that could require more water, time, and money than we expect. Many beautiful, colorful plants use very little water, provide year round color, and reduce yard maintenance. Grouping plants with similar water and sunlight needs makes for easier care. Selecting native desert plants that won't need irrigation after they're established and are adapted to Arizona's conditions would be ideal. At the nursery, read the plant's information label or ask about the water and sunshine needs of the plants you're considering. ♣





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 PERMIT # 129

Office Hours:
 Monday - Thursday
 7:30 - 5:30
 Friday 7:30 - Noon

For more ideas about low water and low maintenance plants, visit Metro Water's demonstration garden, located near the front entrance of our offices at 6265 N. La Cañada Drive. Full color low-water plant selection guides are available. ♠

Board of Directors:

Judy Scrivener, Chair
 Bryan Foulk, Vice Chair
 Jim Doyle, Member
 Helen Ireland, Member
 Dan M. Offret, Member

Board Meetings:

Monday, April 10
 Monday, May 8
 Monday, June 12

Board meetings are held at 6265 N. La Cañada Drive and typically start at 6:00 p.m.

Metro Water offices will be closed on:

Monday, May 29, 2017 for Memorial Day



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