

Antelope Valley Press – Saturday, January 19, 2008

Seven of eleven agencies have OK'd water management plan

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PALMDALE — Seven of the 11 lead agencies that participated in the Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan have approved the document intended to ensure enough water for the Valley, now and in the future.

Members of the Antelope Valley State Water Contracts Association board, the Joint Powers Authority comprising representatives from Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency, Palmdale Water District and Littlerock Creek Irrigation District, voted unanimously in favor of the document Thursday night.

All 11 agencies must adopt the plan by the Jan. 28 deadline in order to compete for up to \$25 million from a state grant that would help pay for priority projects identified in the document, such as water banking and conservation, flood management and habitat restoration.

The agencies also are required to adopt a groundwater management plan, noted Curtis Paxton, interim general manager for the water contractors association. He explained that adoption of the groundwater plan, in addition to the integrated plan, provides the Antelope Valley an "opportunity for additional funding."

The document involved "a lot of work, and a lot of meetings," said water association board member Dick Wells, the president of the Palmdale Water District board who participated in a year's worth of stakeholder meetings. He told his board colleagues that he was "glad to see Palmdale (City Council) adopt" the plan.

Palmdale City Council members

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voted 5-0 in favor of the regional water plan at their Wednesday night meeting, roughly a week after conducting a joint workshop with the Palmdale Water District to inform the public of details contained in the document.

"Those experts were good," said association board Chairwoman Barbara Hogan, referring to Ken Kirby of Kirby Consultants, who facilitated the workshop with a panel of water professionals that answered attendees questions.

"It was a good team effort, getting the speakers there, a good mix of people," Paxton said.

"It was very effective," Hogan added. The consensus was that the workshop helped clear away any doubts or concerns that two or three folks expected to vote on the plan had expressed.

Hogan, a board member of Littlerock Creek Irrigation District, said that agency unanimously approved the document Wednesday night. Los Angeles County Waterworks District 40, Lancaster City Council, AVEK and Rosamond Community Services District already had adopted the plan.

The Palmdale Water District board will vote on adoption on Wednesday following a public hearing on the topic. Though the majority of board members have talked favorably about the plan, the one holdout could be newly elected Di-

rector Jeff Storm, who has claimed that the plan includes "toilet-to-tap" projects, an allegation disputed by water experts who attended the stakeholder meetings.

Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts 14 and 20 are slated to vote that same date during a meeting at department headquarters in Whittier, according to Ray Tremblay, head of the Monitoring Section of the Sanitation Districts' Technical Services Division.

The Quartz Hill Water District board has slated a special meeting and public hearing at 5:30 p.m. Thursday to vote on the document, agency General Manager Chad Reed said.

"The board of directors of Quartz Hill Water District have all given (the plan) positive reviews," Reed said. "They think it seems like a great document. As we've been doing different drafts, I've been sharing information with them, so they're very aware of the content."

"I don't see where there will be any opposition."

Reed said he foresees a 4-0 vote, only because Director James Powell will be unable to attend the special meeting. "But," Reed added, Powell has remarked "numerous times (that plan) is the way of the future for the Valley."

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