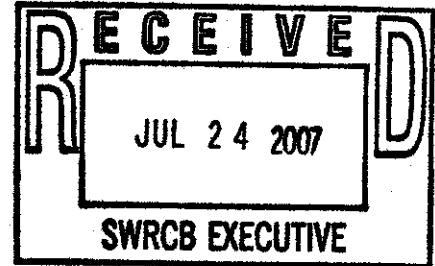




July 19, 2007

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Quality
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



Attn: Song Her, Clerk of the Board, Executive Office

Re: Support for Item 10, Alternative 1, No Action, California Ocean Plan Amendment

On behalf of SCWD², a desalination task force representing the Soquel Creek Water District and the City of Santa Cruz, we are writing you regarding the Ocean Plan Amendment, "Issue 10. Desalination Facilities and Brine Disposal." After reviewing the proposed amendment, we request that you select, Alternative 1, No Action, in determining the future of the existing Ocean Plan.

Currently, the customers of the Soquel Creek Water District and the City of Santa Cruz are subject to extreme water restrictions in drought conditions and groundwater overdraft that threatens our coastal aquifer. Both of our agencies have adopted water plans that include a portfolio that stresses water conservation first and supply augmentation only after the implementation of aggressive water conservation programs. After much study and public input, the supply option for both agencies is a shared seawater desalination facility. Like all state water providers, we are dealing with long-term climate change, recent court rulings threatening water supplies, and over-appropriated rivers and coastal streams. In search of answers, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, along with experts in the water industry and technical community, has also come out in support of ocean water desalination as a means to address these critical issues.

Ocean water desalination is a recognized part of not just our region's, but California's future water portfolio. Our ability to utilize new water supplies for urban use through desalination will provide much needed security for our drinking water supply, protect agricultural needs, and safeguard our natural resources. For these reasons, the development of a new source of water is an urgent necessity.

In order to provide us an opportunity to research and review the potential of ocean water desalination, we ask that Alternative 1. No Action, be selected by the Board, so as to prevent any artificial standard (percentage of natural background) from impeding the continued design of desalination plants where feasible and appropriate to meet the needs of our current and future generations.

The scoping document, Amendment of The Water Quality Control Plan, Ocean Water of California, June 2007, Issue 10 states that, "Currently, there is no Ocean Plan objective that applies specifically to brine water discharges from desalination plants or groundwater desalination facilities." This conclusion is without merit, as the current Ocean Plan is protective of marine resources with respect to brine discharges without additional limits set at this time.

The Ocean Plan, as drafted, provides safeguards to ensure the protection of marine species and plants through toxicity testing on sensitive life stages of marine species through the inclusion of the following practices:

- Water quality objectives are set for bacteriological, physical, chemical and biological characteristics of receiving water for discharge;
- Such objectives include limits on concentrations of metals and other chemical constituents of a discharge for the protection of marine species as well as human health;
- The standards apply to the naturally occurring chemical constituents found in ocean water that is concentrated as part of the reverse osmosis process and discharged back into the ocean as brine; and
- The continued protection of the marine environment through regular testing with the sensitive life stages of species most likely to be impacted by any discharge.

In conclusion, we are in the early stages of development of ocean water desalination both in our community and in other coastal areas of California. Recognizing that much work lies ahead, the water industry has initiated additional site-specific research on hyper salinity effects and will continue to do so as new sites are proposed. As this process continues, good public policy would suggest we get more data and experience before we begin to amend the Ocean Plan by imposing arbitrary standards without regard for the individual differences in plant designs and size and locations.

For these reasons, we recommend that the Board select Alternative 1. No Action. If we can be of any assistance to you, or provide any additional information regarding this issue, please contact Bill Kocher, Water Director, at 831-420-5200 at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Bruce Daniels, Board President
Soquel Creek Water District and
Vice-Chair, Desalination Task Force



Mike Rotkin, City Council Member
City of Santa Cruz and
Chair, Desalination Task Force