



Media Release

Santa Ana Water Board renews discharge permit for proposed Huntington Beach desalination plant

Poseidon Water must complete mitigation measures

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Contact: Ailene Voisin
Ailene.Voisin@waterboards.ca.gov

RIVERSIDE – The Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board late last Thursday, April 29, conditionally renewed Poseidon Water’s permit governing the seawater intake and waste discharges from its proposed desalination facility in Orange County. The board’s order requires Poseidon Water to minimize negative impacts on marine life by directing the company to undertake a series of mitigation measures and prohibiting the intake of seawater and the discharge of concentrated brine until certain conditions are met.

Poseidon Water’s proposed \$1.4 billion facility is projected to produce 50 million gallons per day of potable water – enough to serve an estimated 100,000 households – through desalination, or the removal of salt from seawater. The facility would be built on 12 acres of land adjacent to the AES Huntington Beach power plant, and it would be the second largest desalination plant in the United States, behind the Claude “Bud” Lewis facility in San Diego County. Poseidon Water, the former owner and current operator of the Lewis facility, must also obtain approval from the Coastal Commission before beginning construction.

Ensuring the facility’s compliance with ocean protection standards while balancing the community’s drinking water needs has been a focus of the board throughout the lengthy permit renewal process.

“Reaching this compromise decision was long awaited as the board invested the time required to reach a decision that protects the environment and serves the community,” said Lana Peterson, Chair of the Santa Ana Water Board. “In reaching our decision, the board upheld our duties to protect ocean water quality and marine life, while balancing Poseidon’s concerns regarding construction financing of the proposed facility and the Orange County Water District’s need to secure a reliable, sustainable water source that protects against climate change and prolonged droughts.”

Poseidon Water applied to renew its original 2012 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit in 2016, and since that time the Santa Ana Water Board has reviewed over 300 technical documents on equipment design, subsurface



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conditions, and alternate locations, among other aspects, to adhere to [Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters \(Ocean Plan\)](#). Amended in 2016, the Ocean Plan mandates how the regional water quality control boards assess whether a desalination facility uses the best available site, design, technology, and mitigation measures feasible to control waste discharges into the ocean and minimize negative impacts on marine life.

To comply with the plan's requirements, Poseidon Water agreed to install fine mesh, wedge wire screens on the plant's intake pipe and affix a diffuser to its discharge structure to reduce marine mortality and impacts of the brine effluent to the ocean. The company also agreed to expand its mitigation plans at the Bolsa Chica Wetlands to achieve 59.2 acres of mitigation credit and to create an artificial reef offshore of Palos Verdes to restore rocky reef habitat buried by recent landslides for an additional 41.3 acres of mitigation credits.

To incentivize Poseidon Water to implement the mitigation measures as quickly as possible, the order prohibits the facility from intaking seawater and discharging waste into the ocean until the company completes several permit requirements to the satisfaction of the board.

Due to a high level of public interest, the Santa Ana Water Board conducted multiple informational workshops on various aspects of the project; it also received and reviewed hundreds of written and oral comments during its proceedings.

More information on [desalination](#) is available on the Water Boards' website.

The Water Boards' mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and ensure proper allocation and efficient, beneficial use for present and future generations.

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