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To: MPWSP-EIR
Subject: More comments and questions re Cal Am's DEIR

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Attn:

CEQA Coordinator

NEPA Coordinator

Date: September 30, 2015

Comments on DEIR and requests.

The DEIR and the authors of it (ESA) have played down the fact that there is no operational ocean slant well anywhere in the world. Shouldn't the EIS contain research on whatever experience there is that suggests success? Is there not a burden of proof to define viability that is backed up by documentation? NEPA requires an expert opinion, or at least agency opinion, about the viability of slant wells that draw water from under the seabed. The EIS should document where this has been installed, how successful it has been, and for how long. The problem that has not been addressed in the DEIR is the effectiveness of slant wells over a reasonable amount of time. The Monterey ratepayers are being asked to finance, maintain, and use this unproven technology, and bear the financial risk for any and all expenses. Surely you can understand the resistance to such a ratepayer risk. It is clear that the firms that will benefit magnificently with financial profit from this project are not offering any front end risk capital. The financial equation for risk-reward is reversed. Therefore it is incumbent on the CEQA and NEPA processes to evaluate extensively the practical problems of undertaking a largely unproven technology. With no operating slant wells for ocean desal anywhere in the world, there has to be some professional opinion about its practical reliability, the risks for public funding, and the impact on ratepayers for life cycle maintenance and replacement projections.

All the major state agencies promote the use of subsurface intakes because they are environmentally superior. Granted the concept is attractive, but the fact remains that there is no proof that it has any long range viability, or that the cost will not be excessive. It does little good to base such a huge cost on unspecific proof or engineering opinions largely generated by Cal Am consultants and project advocates. It is the responsibility of CPUC and EAS to apply CEQA in its most objective sense. It is not apparent that this has happened, nor that it will happen.

Where does ESA acknowledge that some form of open ocean intake is viable? It has been reported so from Huntington Beach under Coastal Commission participation. DEIR comments defend subsurface as the preferred intake. OK, no problem there. But feasibility is the question, and options clearly include open ocean intake, especially when technology is vastly improved from 20 to 50 years ago. ESA has not provided a decent review of improved current technology and design of surface intakes that minimize impingement and entrainment. Also ESA did not review the phase-down or phase-out of power plant open ocean intakes, and the resulting reduction of threats to marine life. Such progress at reducing open ocean intakes at Moss Landing will be a tremendous improvement in environmental protections, and a small desal with open ocean intakes would be a small impact in the cumulative picture. This cumulative impact issue (great reduction from power plants, small increase from desal, net gain for the environment) was not addressed. The full cumulative impact analysis was absent here.

1. The SWRCB has adopted regulations concerning the need for a feasibility analysis of subsurface intakes, prior to pursuing an open ocean intake for desal. Will there be a deeper discussion of the factors that define "feasibility"? This is particularly relevant regarding long term reliability, since there is no operating slant well anywhere in the world.
2. The Cal Am project DEIR contains language that slant wells at Moss Landing are not feasible. But other subsurface intakes may be possible. These options need an exhaustive analysis.
3. Is it possible or practicable to have a combined partial subsurface – partial open ocean intake system? If any part of a subsurface intake is financially or environmentally feasible, it will go a long way toward satisfying SWB desires.
4. The use of existing infrastructure is encouraged by the SWRCB amendment to the Ocean Plan Amendment. Such infrastructure exists at both Moss landing alternative desal proposals. Will this fact be assessed in detail in the FEIR to show positive tradeoffs for other impacts associated with disturbances required for other intake systems?
5. The EIR should address the history of power plant open ocean intakes as a comparison to the desal potential use. Power plants on the CA coast are required to phase down, if not out, the open ocean cooling facilities, in favor of newer technology for air cooled turbines. But some ocean intake is still required as source water for the cooling or maintenance purposes. What are these new reduced intake demands? How can these new reduced ocean intakes be compared to the future pumping for desal? It will be true that the net reduction in ocean intakes will be substantially reduced from prior years, thus minimizing any desal intake, resulting in a substantial net gain for environmental protections. Will this comparison and analysis be undertaken? There needs to be a clear picture of this, in graph form.
6. Any negative impacts of open ocean intake near the Elkhorn Slough will be used against the project. But the impact of the points in #5 above can help negate or mitigate those arguments. The EIR needs to fully explore the offsetting impacts of reduced power plant ocean intake versus some ocean intake for desal. Will this be addressed?

7. Will the cumulative impacts of the wind down of power plant open ocean intakes be compared and analyzed regarding the potential of smaller intakes for Moss Landing desal proposals?

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