

5-3-09 The Signal

Setting the record straight on our local water supply

Response to April 23 "Environmentally Speaking" commentary in The Signal: "A perfect storm for water woes in the SCY."

Recently, the city of Santa Clarita Planning Commission met jointly with Castaic Lake Water Agency staff to help familiarize the city's land use decision makers with our current water-supply management and planning activities.

Considering the fact that California has endured three years of drought, it's only logical for anyone — including those responsible for land use planning — to ask, "Where do we stand regarding water supply?"

Despite the state's current circumstances, the Santa Clarita Valley is in relatively good shape water-wise.

The Castaic Lake Water Agency advocates an ongoing ethic of "smart water use" and conservation, a diversity of local supply sources, and prudent planning, which have resulted in our community being spared from mandatory reductions in water use, unlike some other California communities.

Further, the long-term outlook shows there will be sufficient water to meet the future needs of our valley, including anticipated population growth.

This is based on available state-planning studies that consider the impacts of climate change on the State Water Project as well as other supplies and water banking programs that enable us to store water for future use on a not-so-rainy day.

million pipelines are being built at no expense to local residents as a result of the favorable settlement of litigation by Castaic Lake Water Agency and three local water retailers against the current and former owners of the Whittaker-Bermite property.

Water supply portfolio
Castaic Lake, which wholesales water to most of the Santa Clarita Valley, does not rely on contaminated water or "paper water" that does not exist.

Further, CLWA does not rely solely on the State Water Project. A great deal of CLWA's planning efforts are focused on se-

of the ongoing drought and court-ordered reductions in pumping from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The State Water Project subsequently announced an increase in its allocation to 20 percent and then to 30 percent.

As a result, the greater-than-initially projected State Water Project allocation will provide additional flexibility, enabling Castaic Lake to save more water for use in future dry years.

In addition to the State Water Project, other sources secured by CLWA include water from the Kern River (which is not subject to the allocation fluctuations of the

State Water Project), a Yuba County water purchasing program called the Yuba Accord, two Kern County water banking programs, locally recycled water, CLWA's "flexible storage" of water in Castaic Lake and, last but not least, local groundwater, which provides about half of our total supply.

CLWA and local water retailers are proud of this diverse water-supply portfolio, which is the product of many years of prudent and sound water management and planning.

What about chloride?

During the joint study session, city planning commission-

ers inquired as to the relationship of our local water supply and the chloride levels in the Santa Clara River.

Complying with the chloride standard is mainly the responsibility of the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, which plan to implement a treatment system to meet the standard.

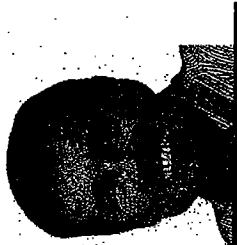
CLWA and the local water retailers worked with the Sanitation Districts and other stakeholders in the downstream "reaches" of the Santa Clara River to develop the plan, which will most cost-effectively address the issue and preserve a critical element of our water supply portfolio, recycled water.

In answer to the question of whether the planned expansion of CLWA's Rio Vista Water Treatment Plant will meet the standards for chlorides being released into the Santa Clara River, the answer is "yes."

The water released from the treatment plant meets current and future chloride-emission standards, and will continue to do so after the expansion is completed.

CLWA and the city each take a great deal of pride in doing the public's business transparently. Residents can be certain the city is exercising a high level of care and caution when it comes to issues like public safety and water supply for new development.

Paul Brotzman is director of community development for the city of Santa Clarita; Dirk Marks is resources manager for Castaic Lake Water Agency. Their column reflects their own views and not necessarily those of The Signal.



Paul Brotzman

Perchlorate treatment

Locally, a handful of water wells have been closed since 1997 due to contamination by perchlorate, a by-product of rocket fuel. The wells in question were contaminated over several decades of munitions testing and manufacturing by Whittaker-Bermite and other explosives manufacturers on property near the center of our valley southeast of Saugus Speedway.

It has taken a great deal of hard work by the Castaic Lake Water Agency, the city and the local water retailers, but in the very near future we expect to see the opening of a new treatment plant that uses ion exchange technology to remove perchlorate from the water. The treated water will be safely blended into the water supply.

The technology is proven, the plant is nearing completion, and we will have it in operation within a few months.

The \$5 million plant and \$14

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curing and managing additional sources of water to help absorb the State Water Project's "down years."

In planning for 2009, CLWA and the local water retailers based their water supply outlook on the state's initial estimates that the State Water Project would provide its contractors (like CLWA) just 15 percent of their "full" contract amounts this year, as a result