



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Environmental Groups Challenge Inadequate Desalination Review

City of Carlsbad's Approval of Desalination Plant Changes Sparks Lawsuit

SAN DIEGO, CA – Environmental groups filed a lawsuit Friday challenging the City of Carlsbad's decision to approve changes to the Carlsbad Desalination Project (CDP) without sufficient review. The suit, brought by San Diego Coastkeeper and Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation, alleges failure to comply with state environmental laws.

The City originally approved the CDP and completed the required environmental review in August 2006. Three years later, project proponent Poseidon Resources sought approval of major changes to the CDP and its delivery pipelines. On September 15th, the City approved the proposed changes without completing the necessary environmental review.

Environmental groups, including Coastkeeper, argued changes to the project since 2006 necessitated further review. The desalination plant will now have a substantially different configuration, while delivery pipelines have been moved to completely new locations. None of these changes were studied in sufficient detail.

In addition to Poseidon's proposed changes, other circumstances surrounding the CDP have changed.

"Every agency to review the project subsequent to the City's 2006 approval found major impacts to the environment," stated Gabriel Solmer, Legal Director for San Diego Coastkeeper. "It defies explanation that the City would ignore those impacts and the changes that have occurred."

During the latest approval, the City again failed to adequately address the marine life impacts that will result from the project's intake of seawater or the project's greenhouse gas emissions, totaling 900,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide over the life of the project.

San Diego Coastkeeper has promoted a water supply hierarchy for years, in order to avoid just the sort of impacts caused by this project. Coastkeeper routinely advocates for conservation and smart land use practices to be considered first, followed by water reuse and recycling, and lastly responsible, environmentally-friendly desalination if needed. More voices have joined this call for a water 'loading order'. Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, a State Lands Commissioner who had voted to approve the Poseidon project at that agency, has since expressed concerns with moving forward with desalination before first implementing environmentally friendly water supply options.

"Even with the current mitigation, the project changes will have a negative impact on our coastal environment and climate," noted Solmer. "The City simply did not do the required review to understand and account for those changes."

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Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region's bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. We balance community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.