



Press Release

September 9, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Bruce Reznik, 619-851-9997 (cell); 619-758-7743 ext. 102

City Council Moves Pilot Water Production Facility Forward

Will Hold November Public Meeting on Water Reuse Demonstration Project

SAN DIEGO, CA – The San Diego City Council voted Monday to approve a notice that will give the public an opportunity to comment on a proposed water rate increase to fund a crucial pilot demonstration facility that will use highly treated wastewater to augment local reservoirs. If the pilot project is successful, it could result in a larger Indirect Potable Reuse (IPR) project that will help reduce San Diego's reliance on imported drinking water, safeguard San Diego's water future and decrease sewage discharges to the ocean.

"Water recycling is the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly way to create new, local water supplies," noted Coastkeeper's Executive Director Bruce Reznik. "We applaud the leadership the City Council has continually demonstrated to move this project forward."

The IPR demonstration project is estimated to cost \$11,811,000. This amount includes costs for project management and an independent panel of scientific and technical experts to advise on the development and implementation of the project. A public outreach and education component is also built into the project budget.

The City Council vote was required under Proposition 218, which calls for a public notice and opportunity for comment for rate increases. Along with the increase for the IPR demonstration plant, the City Council also approved noticing for a water rate increase that passes through the increased wholesale water purchase costs from the County Water Authority. By noticing the two rate increases together, the City of San Diego is saving an estimated \$300,000 in mailing fees.

A public hearing will be held on November 17, 2008, giving the public another opportunity to voice any concerns about the rate increase. If the rate increase is approved, the new rate will go

into effect starting January 1st of 2009. The money can then be used to seek approval from the Department of Public Health and ultimately build the demonstration project.

IPR must meet stringent federal and state drinking water standards. A similar project has been implemented in Orange County and is producing 70 million gallons per day, enough water for 500,000 residents.

“A successful water reuse project has been online in Orange County since the beginning of the year and Los Angeles is considering a similar project,” noted Coastkeeper’s Legal Director Gabriel Solmer. “The rate increase will bring San Diego one step closer to following their lead and realizing our goal of water independence and security.”

Because IPR is cost-effective and will provide the region with a municipally-owned, drought-proof supply of water, the project has found support in a variety of groups. Supporters of IPR include not only the environmental community, but dozens of industry and taxpayer groups (including the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and San Diego County Taxpayers Association), municipalities, water districts and commissions.

If the demonstration project is successful, a full-scale project could ultimately provide up to 16 million gallons per day (MDG) of advanced treated water from the North City reclamation facility to augment the San Vicente Reservoir (a local drinking water source).

In 2005, the City prepared a Water Reuse Study that examined various potable and non-potable water reclamation and reuse options for the region. The option that Coastkeeper and other environmental groups have supported, known as NC-3, would provide a mix of potable and non-potable uses, including the 16MGD San Vicente reservoir augmentation project. The study concluded that, “[t]his strategy [NC-3] appears to be the appropriate choice if the driving decision factors are to *maximize recycled water use* and have the *lowest ultimate unit cost*.”

“San Diego still imports over 80% of its water from sources that are steadily declining, including the Colorado River and San Joaquin Delta,” added Reznik. “We need to move aggressively on conservation and water recycling to ensure the region’s long-term security, vitality and economic stability.”

#

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.