



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Agenda Item No.3

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Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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REFERRAL 24.2 - SAN LUCAS LONG-TERM REPLACEMENT WATER SUPPLY PROJECT UPDATE

Consider receiving an update regarding a long-term replacement water supply for the community of San Lucas.

Project Location: Central Salinas Valley Area (San Lucas Community)

Proposed CEQA action: Statutory Exemption pursuant to Section 15262 of the CEQA.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive an update regarding a long-term replacement water supply for the community of San Lucas.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

This report provides a brief background and status update regarding Planning Commission Referral No. 24.2 (San Lucas Long-Term Replacement Water Supply update).

San Lucas is a small, disadvantaged farming community located in unincorporated Monterey County approximately eight miles from King City. The community water system (approximately 100 connections) is owned and operated by the San Lucas County Water District (District). In 2011, a “do not drink” order was issued, and despite establishing an alternative well to serve the community, a second “do not drink” order was issued in 2016. The lack of safe, affordable drinking water for the community has also caused a nearly 20-year delay of a severely needed affordable housing project in San Lucas.

The County and the District are working with the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board)’s Division of Drinking Water to identify potential solutions to address the water quality issues for the community. The State Board is providing the District with Technical Assistance to identify a project that will provide safe drinking water to the community. In July of 2024, the State Board’s technical assistance team released a public draft peer reviewed feasibility study and engineering report for public comment. Technical documents and additional information can be accessed on the State Board’s website at

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/programs/districts/san_lucas.html

The County is supportive of the project that the State Board has identified as an alternative, that would construct a new pipeline to tie into the Cal Water system on the east side of King City and deliver

water directly to the District water distribution tank. The County Board of Supervisors submitted a comment letter dated September 12, 2024 to the State Board in support of “Alternative 1: Intertie with King City”, noting that the pipeline project will have the lowest impact on the community’s water rates long-term, compared to the other project alternatives identified (Exhibit 1).

On March 22, 2013, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) issued Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R3-2013-0031 to the owners and operators of irrigated cropland at Las Colinas Ranch off Cattlemen Road, San Lucas for the discharge of nitrates that contaminated the drinking water source for the San Lucas community. While the responsible party(ies) have been identified for the nitrate water quality issues, other water quality issues also need to be addressed. The responsible party will be partially financially liable for the treatment of nitrates, however, for any project that moves forward.

The “San Lucas Clean Drinking Water Project” is one of the County Board of Supervisors’ legislative policy priorities, seeking continued assistance and funding toward the project alternative that would tie into King City’s water system to address ongoing water quality problems at the existing District water source which have occurred since 2006. The County’s Federal FY24 Community Project Funding request for this project received a \$960,000 grant award through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for preliminary design and environmental review. Additional funding is needed for project design, environmental assessment, engineering, and construction work to provide a clean, long-term, reliable source of drinking water to meet the community’s current and future needs.

The County and its consultant team continues to discuss solutions for the community of San Lucas with our legislative delegation as well as supports, and requests state and federal funding for, a pipeline intertie to the Kings City water system operated and managed by CalWater.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The San Lucas County Water District is the municipal water purveyor for the unincorporated community of San Lucas. The County Health Department’s Environmental Health Bureau regulates the San Lucas Water District’s public water supply in accordance with public health requirements.

The State Board, Regional Board and Rural Community Assistance Corp (RCAC) are providing technical assistance to plan, design, fund and implement a long-term replacement water supply project for the San Lucas community.

Prepared by and Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

Attachments on File with Clerk of the Planning Commission:
Exhibit 1 - September 12, 2024 County Board Letter to State Board