

Valley Voices

Re: Dr. Pepper Snapple and valley water-
printed in the Daily Press on 9-6-2009

The recent letter of Ms. Carolyn Russell in the Daily Press letters was not only thoughtful but it was the first in months that even touches upon the issue of water QUALITY.

In neither of the two Valley Voice letters captioned above is the issue of water quality meaningfully mentioned, discussed or dissected. Why?

Clearly, Mr. Page(MWA director) has motivation and desire(conflict?) to bring more water into the valley but he has not explained to the public that there is a price to pay for the imported inferior quality water. A price financially(someone has to pay) and a price in terms of ultimate contamination of the water filter(the sand and rock of the river bed) and the reduction of the existing underground water quality(a process known as blending). Blending is the process whereby very high quality water is mixed with low quality water and the result is a product of lesser quality.

The Mojave Water Agency(MWA) has a responsibility to protect our water supply as well as our water quality, although they deny this. As a local water well owner, I and others, believe through the process of the groundwater adjudication that the MWA may not allow the export of groundwater from the adjudicated area, even if they replace it later with inferior aqueduct water. To the best of our knowledge the MWA has not produced a ruling from the superior court that allows such an action within the MWA adjudicated area. If such a document exists, the MWA should produce a copy forthwith to ALL stakeholders, not just the water districts, and then provide time to study the document.

In documents of which we have copies, the MWA has asserted that "Water from the State Water Project has always been considered a high quality source..." In addition, the MWA has attempted to sell the idea to the public that "Water for the R3(superwell) project will come from the State Water Project, through the California Aqueduct." Now the argument is complete. State water project water is a high quality source and R3 water comes from the aqueduct, according to the MWA. Unfortunately neither of the above MWA arguments are true! Aqueduct water is highly inferior(ask the contaminated fish at Silverwood Lake) and the R3 water will come from the underground water source, not the aqueduct!

The Dr. Pepper/Snapple plant, according to the letter of Mr. Hampson will "...use about 1.9 million gallons of water per day." Of this amount, it appears that at least 1,000,000 gallons per day will leave our valley in the form of soda pop, which will be exported to areas outside of the Victor Valley. The remaining 900,000 gallons per day will become industrial wastewater.

Although the issue of the QUALITY of the manufacturing by-product(wastewater) was not discussed in either of the Valley Voices letters, it is important for the public to know a bit about the record of ground and groundwater contamination by Snapple's parent company, Coca Cola. Interested readers will find that a quick Google computer

search under the generalization "Coca Cola ground water contamination" will produce multiples of informational articles.

Despite court rulings against Coca Cola, in some cases years have elapsed and Coca Cola has not satisfied the courts orders. This, in spite of the fact that there are State of California and federal laws prohibiting ground and groundwater contamination and pollution.

The Valley Voices letters are replete with grand and important reasons for the necessity of the MWA R3(superwell) project. Primarily, jobs are the reasons for the project.

Who will truly benefit? The City of Victorville, ostensibly in debt over \$20,000,000, most dramatically needs the jobs. SCLA and Adelanto(to a lesser degree) will benefit. Besides the Dr. Pepper/Snapple plant, Victorville needs the R3 water to build 25,000 homes and to supply anymore generating plants they may have planned.

Who pays? The public through a lessening of water quality and the taxes that ultimately pay for any project of this type. The MWA will remind us that some of the financing for R3 is grant money. Nevertheless, it comes from the state and is tax based. The entire taxpaying public of the Victor Valley will be subsidizing this project for Victorville.

Who benefits the least? Perhaps Hesperia. The MWA wants Hesperia to give, free of charge. rights of way across the entire city for the water mains to transport the water from the Mojave River area, ultimately to Victorville's water system. In addition, the MWA is asking, by default, for Hesperia to accept water of an inferior quality compared to that which exists. Finally, and perhaps most outrageously, the MWA wants Hesperia to give \$6,000,000 toward their fair share of the project. For Hesperia's FAIR SHARE, they will receive in turn, one or two water turnout valves attached to the cross-city water main. Hesperia could save \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000 of that money by simply installing two additional water wells within city limits!

Water quality is an issue that has not even begun to be discussed. I ask Mr. Page and others why they have not openly discussed the Semi Tropic underground water storage area near Bakersfield? When the MWA was asked about Semi Tropic they became vague and lacking information. Semi Tropic is a water purchasing scheme in which the MWA is involved, and upon request and purchase, the MWA has water delivered from Semi Tropic and placed into the ground under the Mojave River bed. The problem? Semi Tropic underground water is contaminated with arsenic and other components. The federal governments goal for arsenic in the underground water is 0. That's correct. 0!

As a final note, the public should be aware that the MWA is currently allowing treated sewer water from Lake Arrowhead and other locations to be percolated into our aquifer. The MWA also has plans to place millions of gallons of inferior water from several sources into the aquifer and it will all be done south of Rock Springs Rd. Hmmm...? Mr. Brill(MWA manager), Mr. Page, Ms.Cox, why not place this water in Victorville? Please, don't explain the geology. Explain the politics.

Nevertheless, the MWA has come out in opposition to the reasonable solution to the problem of underground water quality. Simply put, a water treatment facility constructed at Highway 395, near the aqueduct, should solve Victorville's needs. Take the water directly out of the aqueduct, treat it and send it on it's way to Victorville.

The MWA was recently awarded \$4.9 million dollars of bailout money for construction of groundwater ponds and associated facilities(buildings). They also have several million dollars to construct new offices and large monetary reserves. However, since Mr. Brill is against water treatment facilities, none of the MWA's millions will be used to construct a water treatment facility.

The writer of this article was asked by two MWA directors just "... who exactly do you expect to pay for the facility?" My response was that "...those benefiting the most should pay the most." Both directors blushed red in anger and they have not since discussed the subject.

The water drought we are all experiencing is very serious. The MWA must plan to bring sufficient water to the Victor valley for our continuing progress. They must not, however, ignore the very real dilemma of groundwater quality and the safety of our families.

Mr. Page suggested, " I encourage High Desert residents to please do what Ms. Russell did-voice your opinion on water-related matters using this forum..." I am doing precisely that.

Sincerely,

Al Vogler