

Press Release

Public Forum - May 4

on

The Regional Water Project Agreement

High Costs? Unfair Risks?

Lack of accountability to Monterey ratepayers? Questions?

Time: 6pm.

Place: Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Road, Monterey

Sponsor: The League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula

Contact: Linda Agerbak, 659-5229, linda@agerbak.com

Speaker: **Diana Brooks**, from the Division of Ratepayer Advocates (DRA), the California Public Utility Commission, Sacramento, author of a critical new DRA report.

On May 4 a public forum will give ratepayers a chance to learn about the proposed new regional water project agreement, which includes the controversial new desalination plant. The meeting will take place at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Road, starting at 6 pm. The League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula is organizing the meeting.

The speaker will be Diana Brooks, from the Division of Ratepayer Advocates, the consumer protection arm of the California Public Utility Commission. She is the author of analytical new report on the proposed desal agreement.

“The public has had only an extremely short time to understand the new agreements,” says Dennis Mar, President of the local League. “This forum will provide important information that Monterey Peninsula ratepayers need to know.”

“The League is very concerned about the governance structure of the proposed project,” added Mar, “since the Peninsula ratepayers are not directly represented in the decision-making process. The Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, which is elected by the residents who will be affected by new rates, was totally excluded from a significant oversight role.”

PUC hearings on the new agreement will take place in San Francisco from May 10-14. The public may attend but cannot speak. The PUC has the power to accept, deny or amend the proposed agreement.

The public is encouraged to send comments to the public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov. Such comments are copied to the five PUC Commissioners; Administrative Law Judge Angela Mirkin, who is conducting the hearings; and the Division of Ratepayer Advocates, who defend the interests of the public.

Background Timeline:

March 30 – After difficult negotiations, CalAm, Marina Coast Water District and Monterey County Water Resources Agency make public a complex new settlement and financial agreement for a brackish-water desalination plant.

April 5 – Division of Ratepayer Advocates, the consumer protection arm of the California Public Utilities Commission, releases critical preliminary findings on the agreement. Objections include those of cost, reliability and governance:

April 5 – Monterey Peninsula Water Management District withdraws support from the Agreement.

April 5-6 – Supervisor Jane Parker, Citizens for Public Water, Landwatch Monterey County, and League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula raise objections to the Agreement.

May 10-14 – PUC workshops and hearings before Administrative Law Judge Angela Minkin take place in San Francisco. PUC Commissioner Bohn attends. Public may watch hearings but not speak.

June 28 and 29 – Depending on public interest, PUC may schedule public participation workshops on the Monterey Peninsula.

September? – Administrative Law Judge Minkin releases her draft decision.

Before Christmas? – Public Utilities Commission makes final decision on the Coastal Water Project. It can adopt all or part of the Agreement, amend it, or deny it. The PUC's final decision may be different from the Agreement. ENDS