



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Visitors to the Santa Cruz desalination plant's open house tour the facility Saturday.

# Desal plant meeting expectations

Desalination

11-9-08

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Six months into the seawater desalination pilot test program, the Santa Cruz Water Department and Soquel Creek Water District opened the doors to the facility and allowed about 100 curious residents a glimpse Saturday.

Visitors reviewed information about desalination technology and water supply issues within the community, toured the facility and learned about the pilot test project.

"Everything has been going as we expected them to turn out," technical adviser Todd Reynolds said. "We're hoping for more challenging source waters to treat. Santa Cruz waters have been, typically, very clean."

The Santa Cruz Water Department and Soquel Creek Water District are investigating the feasibility of using desalinated water as a supplemental water source during times of drought. Four different pre-treatment technologies along with reverse osmosis desalination technology are being tested for at least a year at the facility, which is near the Seymour Marine Discovery Center at the end of Delaware Avenue.

The results of the pilot plant operations will be used to define the design requirements and costs of a full-scale desalination facility, which may be built in 2015. The pilot plant also will provide data to ensure water quality standards can be met or exceeded for a potable water source and will be included in any

environmental impact report prepared for a full-scale desalination plant.

No decisions regarding the construction of the plant have been discussed yet, according to officials.

"The important thing today is we really want people to see the pilot plant and the capabilities it has especially as this very dry winter is approaching," City Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews said. "We want the public to see how timely such a project is."

Testing at the pilot plant began in March and will continue until March 2009. Pumping 50 gallons a minute, the \$4 million pilot plant is expected to help determine the best kind of pre-filtering process the plant should use.

Visitors throughout the day

had no shortage of questions for the pilot plant's staff, and were intrigued by the kinds of filtering being used at the plant.

"Forty years ago, at the Moss Landing power plant, I started the thermal seawater conversion plant," said Sam Farrington of Santa Cruz. "We've come a long way since then."

Bridget Canty and Sergey Frolov just moved to Santa Cruz in September and were eager to learn about the city's water issues and solutions.

"As an environmental consultant, I like to be involved with issues on a local level and it's interesting to see how the water scarcity problem is going to be solved," Canty said. "It's great information and is a great project."

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Tour group leader and project engineer Erik Desormeaux said

the day's turnout was a nice surprise, despite poor weather.

"People in Santa Cruz seem more involved with the city's developments," Desormeaux said. "This plant really is the city's last option for supple-

mental water. We have to do something otherwise the next drought will be very difficult."

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