

Water plan seeks pipeline

Other options are too expensive and burdensome

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WATSONVILLE — Pajaro Valley farmers might be able to solve the area's water shortage problem without piping in water from Santa Clara — if they're willing to pay at least \$37 million more for exclusively local supplies, a newly-released report says.

That conclusion — detailed in the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency's Basin Management Plan 2000 — is based on an estimate that building a desalination plant at Moss Landing or at the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant would cost \$174 million.

The report said that building a desalination plant along with the Harkins Slough project and developing recycled water would produce 17,400 acre-feet of water a year but still fail to fully meet the valley's needs.

The other all-local solution — which includes dams at College Lake and Bolsa de San Cayetano — would cost an estimated \$209 million and would fall short of meeting the valley's needs by about 18,000 acre-feet a year, according to the report.

By contrast, the writers of the report — consultants working under the direction of Raines, Melton, and Carella, Inc. — estimate that a combination of local supply projects and an import pipeline will cost \$137 million. That alternative — recommended by the consultants — would meet all the valley's water needs.

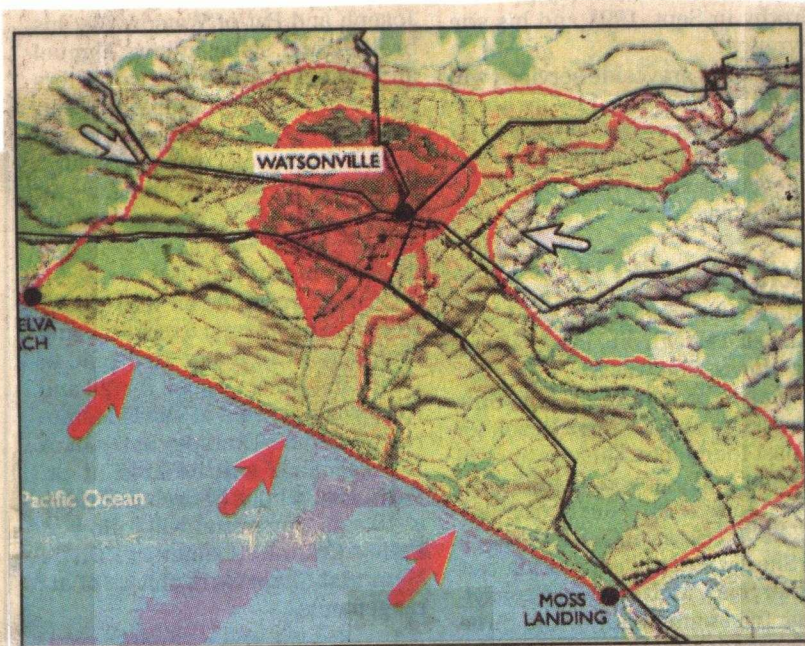
The report analyzed several ideas suggested by members of the No Overpriced Pipeline Ever group and others as better options than an import pipeline.

It said that one of those ideas — using the Pajaro River to transport water from the Gilroy area instead of building a pipeline — is impractical because the

water already in the river is too salty in the summer months when it would be needed and would pollute the imported water. In addition, a lot of the water would be lost to seepage through the river bottom.

The report's discussion of expanding the College Lake and Bolsa de San Cayetano dams said logistical problems would be significant.

"There are two significant implementation issues regarding these two surface storage projects," the report reads in part. "The first major concern is seismic — both the Zayante and San Andreas faults are located within a few miles of the proposed projects. The dam sites are vulnerable to a large magnitude



Raines, Melton & Carella, Inc.

Groundwater flow in the Pajaro Valley basin.

earthquake resulting in ground shaking and potential liquefaction. All project facilities would have to be designed to reduce the potential for failure and the subsequent downstream flooding and erosion, significantly increasing the cost of both dam projects."

The report also said that getting the permits to build those dams would be difficult because of the protected status of the endangered migratory steelhead population.

"The conflict between reservoir operations and fish migration is difficult to mitigate," the report said. "Although not insurmountable, these issues tend to add cost and reduce project yield."

A 30-day public review process — including a public hearing tentatively scheduled for June 19 — begins now to allow for public feedback on the plan.

REFERENCE

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