Seawater desalination plant construction gets approval

First deliveries to Vallecitos projected for 2016

For 55 years, Vallecitos has met its customers’ water needs by importing water from hundreds of miles away. However, with recent approval from District wholesaler San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), a new, drought-proof source will soon be available, and starting in 2016, it won’t have to be funneled to us from any further away than the Carlsbad shore.

After 15 years in the making a landmark agreement was reached, clearing the last hurdle for construction of the Carlsbad desalination plant that will remove salt from approximately 50 million gallons of seawater a day and deliver a portion of it to residents in the Vallecitos service area.

This much-needed water source from the nearby Pacific Ocean will increase service reliability and take pressure off deliveries currently imported from the Colorado River and Sacramento–San Joaquin delta in Northern California, where water availability is often limited due to pumping restrictions or drought.

Under terms of the agreement, Vallecitos will receive at least 3,500 acre feet (1 acre foot equals 325,851 gallons) or more than 1 billion gallons annually to complement existing imported supplies. When combined with a recent agreement struck with nearby Olivenhain Municipal Water District to purchase treated water from the Olivenhain Dam, Vallecitos will see up to 36 percent of its long term annual supplies drawn from local sources, easing reliance on imported supplies and providing a measure of sustainability the District has long been striving for.

SDCWA has already secured a favorable interest rate for financing construction of the desalination plant next to the Encina Power Station and 10-mile pipeline that will extend from the facility to the Water Authority’s aqueduct in San Marcos. This rate is projected to save an estimated $200 million over three decades when compared to earlier projections.

Although the costs associated with delivering drought-proof, desalinated ocean water to your tap currently comes at a premium, cost analysis have suggested that this source may be cheaper than imported water supplies in the future. It would also end Vallecitos’ 100 percent reliance on imported supplies to increase sustainability and water availability for existing and future generations.

Realizing the dwindling water availability and regulatory restrictions associated with pumping the water hundreds of miles away, Vallecitos Board Directors as far back as 2005 put into motion forward-thinking projects such as seawater desalination and increasing output at the District’s water recycling plant to increase service reliability in our region.
Vallecitos: Going through great lengths to ensure water reliability and service in the future

Along with shoring up the delivery of drought-proof desalinated water by 2016, Vallecitos also took two additional steps to further ensure reliable water and exceptional service in the future.

The District entered into agreement with nearby Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD) to receive additional water from its treatment plant and also completed its first-ever Strategic Plan.

The additional 2,750 acre feet that will eventually come from the Olivenhain reservoir is the result of a negotiated deal between both agencies and was seen long ago by the Vallecitos Board of Directors as a potential long-term solution to improving our agency’s water availability.

With Olivenhain’s contract to supply water to wholesaler San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) expiring in 2014, the water from the OlivenhainTreatment Plant became available to make this desired goal a reality.

Purchasing unused, surplus treated water provides Vallecitos an additional supplier and access point to complement imported supplies received from SDCWA. It also controls power costs the District incurs by moving water from its northern tanks to the south part of the District, saving ratepayer dollars.

This agreement should serve the District just as well moving forward as its newly adopted Strategic Plan, a finalized document that took into consideration input from the Board of Directors and all levels off staff to develop a new mission statement, branding, vision, values and objectives to guide the District 5 to 7 years into the future.

After finding a consensus on strategic areas of focus, the 2012 Strategic Plan and corresponding Business Plan were drafted with the goal of improving Vallecitos’ infrastructure integrity, internal communication, workforce development, fiscal responsibility, public education and outreach and alternative water source exploration.

Vallecitos Water District will strive to complete 150 tasks listed in the Business Plan during the life of the document.

As a working document, the Business Plan goals can be updated as needed to address future regulatory, fiscal, and environmental changes that impact the District. The Vallecitos Board of Directors will review the Business Plan quarterly to evaluate progress in meeting the goals and to make revisions as needed.

If you are interested in viewing the 2012 Strategic Plan, it is available for public view at www.vwd.org.
Be sure to ask to see Vallecitos Employee ID before granting access to your property

At the Vallecitos Water District our dedication to safety doesn’t end with the water delivery but continues with our staff interaction with customers while out in the field.

In recent years, there has been a rise in scams of people impersonating water district employees to gain access to your personal property.

At all times, District employees will have an official photo identification card when conducting District business. Although they may or may not be in company vehicles or dressed in uniform, all will carry this ID card.

The majority of maintenance or repairs staff performs associated with water or sewer delivery rarely requires a Vallecitos staff member to enter your home. Regardless, for your protection, we encourage you to ask Vallecitos employees to show you their District issued identification prior to allowing access to your premises.

These important cards feature a photo and much of the same information listed on a valid California ID or driver’s license. If you have questions about the validity of someone entering your home on behalf of Vallecitos Water District, please call us as soon as possible at (760) 744-0460.

Further your water education at Vallecitos’ Water Academy

Ever wanted a behind-the-scenes look at Vallecitos Water District in action? Sign up for our next Water Academy. The all-day affair features presentations covering the District, its projects, and guided, chartered bus tours to the District’s award-winning Twin Oaks Reservoirs and upgraded Meadowlark Water Reclamation facility. To reserve a spot in an upcoming Water Academy, contact Alicia Yerman at (760) 744-0460, ext. 223. Hurry, space is limited.
Once submitted, your entry will be judged on overall attractiveness, plant selection, design, appropriate maintenance and effective methods of irrigation.

For those unfamiliar with advanced methods of irrigation, you are welcome to visit the Water Conservation Garden in El Cajon. You can also make a virtual trip by going to www.thegarden.org or get tips at www.bewaterwise.com.