

RAINBOW SEARCHES OUT NEW WATER SOURCES

The RMWD Engineering Committee recently attended a presentation by the District's consultant regarding preliminary findings on a project to seek out new water resources for RMWD. Although many possible sources were discussed the study focuses on three main areas; groundwater, imported raw water, and recycled water.

Groundwater: RMWD doesn't have access to any true groundwater aquifers, but there are local areas of perched groundwater that are fed by irrigation and rain percolating into the ground. Most of this perched water is of poor quality and is often brackish or otherwise full of undesirable minerals. Fortunately, technology has advanced to the point that water treatment is now a viable option for this type of project. Treatment methods would depend on the quality of water being processed but would likely include either microfiltration or reverse osmosis. Both of these treatment options are costly, but are favorable when compared to the forecasted price of imported water.

One option in pursuing access to groundwater is by partnering with property owners who have riparian water rights and desire to use that water for the betterment of their land. Through an Agency Agreement RMWD could extract water from a centrally located well, treat it to acceptable standards, and then sell the water back to the customer at a discounted rate.

Imported Raw Water: This option involves RMWD buying raw water from the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) and then either treating it and using it for a domestic water supply, or selling it directly to agricultural customers who don't need highly treated water. With the first option the District would need to build a treatment plant and connect the supply directly to the existing distribution system.

If we pursue direct resale to agricultural consumers we would need to install a dual distribution system to supply the agricultural water. These are expensive options but when considered over a long period of time they are cost effective, increase water reliability, and offset the high cost of importing treated water. One major drawback to these options is the uncertainty of a reliable raw water supply from MWD.

Recycled Water: Currently Rainbow owns the capacity to treat 1.5 million gallons of water per day at the wastewater treatment plant in Oceanside. Once it is properly treated the water is sent to the ocean for disposal. Other local agencies, such as the Fallbrook Public Utility District, have surplus recycled water that is available for a reasonable price. This option examines utilizing recycled water for irrigation use throughout our service area. It would require quite a bit of infrastructure, such as separate pipes, reservoirs and pump stations, but the relatively low purchase price of treated water helps defer the high capital costs—particularly compared to the cost of purchasing treated water from MWD.

Recycled water is well suited for irrigating large commercial areas like parks, schools, golf courses and road medians. Although some communities have gone so far as to have residential neighborhoods irrigated with recycled water that is not a practical alternative for us.

Evaluating these potential benefits of new water resources is a multi-phased process. One benefit is providing a local alternative water supply that gives us some relief when imported supplies are reduced, like in a drought or in the event of an earthquake that disrupts imported water delivery.

A second consideration is the cost of water from these projects. The MWD projects considerable increases in imported water costs for the foreseeable future. Although these projects will be expensive, if they are financed over a long period of time the capital construction cost can be absorbed over many years, thereby helping to lower overall water costs.

A final factor is the ability to implement the project. As we discovered with the Poseidon Desalination Project there are external forces that may derail even the most worthy of plans. Environmental and political considerations, the will of the ratepayers, and many other issues must be evaluated as part of the decision making process.

Each of these options requires additional study and evaluation by the Engineering Committee and the research will continue well into this year. We will keep you up to date on our progress as we try to reduce our total dependence on imported treated water.

**RAINBOW
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**What To Do With
Kitchen Fat, Oil &
Grease?**

What are you to do with your kitchen fat, oil and grease that is left when all the cooking is done? Fallbrook Waste & Recycling has a safe and environmentally friendly option for disposing of household fat, oil and grease.

Everyone is asked to simply collect used discarded fat, oil and grease in a leak-proof container and when that container is full drop it off at the Fallbrook Waste & Recycling Buyback Center located at 550 W. Aviation Road in Fallbrook. The fat, oil and grease will then ultimately be processed, filtered and converted into bio-diesel by a third party processor.

It is important that participants do not mix these three items with any other oils, such as motor oil or gear oil, that inhibit the process of converting the mix into bio-diesel.

Fat, oil and grease has become the main cause of drain and sewer backups. Since the grease does not mix with water, it solidifies in the pipes.

Another reason to recycle your fat, oil and grease is to keep the grease out of landfills, and prevent sewage backups related to its improper disposal, which can in turn pollute our beaches.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

RMWD is currently seeking new community volunteers to fill vacancies on its Communications Committee. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the RMWD Communications Committee, please contact Dawn Washburn at (760) 728-1178 Ext. 129.

Gopher Canyon Water Main Break

On January 3rd a major water main under Gopher Canyon Road began leaking causing damage to the road resulting in its temporary closure to traffic. Crews worked through the night to repair the pipe and reopen Gopher Canyon.

We apologize for the inconvenience this road closure caused for residents of the area.

CONSOLIDATION UPDATE

As we have reported in the past the Rainbow Municipal Water District and Fallbrook Public Utility District are looking into the potential of combining the two agencies as a way to cut operating expenses. If ultimately approved by the respective boards the districts could either consolidate through a formal process or could simply join forces through a joint-power agreement (JPA). Either option saves money but the formal consolidation is projected to save the greatest amount—about \$2.5 million per year vs. \$850,000 per year in reductions for the JPA.

One issue with the formal consolidation is the lengthy time period required for implementation so both boards have decided to move forward with the formation of a JPA as an interim measure while we still evaluate formal consolidation. The creation of the JPA will allow both agencies to achieve some of the cost savings while we continue to focus on long-term consolidation. The boards will be considering the JPA alternate in January and could vote on formation as early as February. Under a JPA both entities remain separate. If implemented the new JPA would only function as the administrative and management branch for both districts, thereby eliminating the need for duplicate (and costly) overhead. All other decisions relating to the Districts (rate setting, rules and regulations, etc.) would remain under the purview of the respective boards.

We will continue to update you on this important issue in future newsletters.