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Hemphill: Turn water crisis over to private sector

By Alan Hemphill

December 19, 2007

We can start solving the water shortage by replacing all of those elected water boards with private enterprise.

If General Motors was delivering water to San Diego County, can you picture them advertising, "Please buy less of our product!"?

GM's profit would drop, their stock would fall, and their CEO would be collecting unemployment.

A private water system would find water sources, because their stock prices would rise with newly found sources, and the private company would prosper. As it stands, employees of the government-run system continue to collect their salaries whether a drop of water is delivered or not.

If water was a profit-making process, there would be giant, encapsulated icebergs floating toward Southern California.

We have been awaiting a privately funded desalinization plant for decades — to be paid for by greedy capitalists anxious to bring us water — and it has been delayed for decades by the same government apparatus that stifles the delivery of water from other sources. Not a penny of government money has been asked for by Poseidon Resources, Inc. of Connecticut, who wants to spend \$300 million to bring us water.

As is usually the case with such good deeds, it did not go unpunished. Two environmental organizations sued, contending (accurately) that the sea water returned to the ocean had more salinity than the ocean itself. (Whatever happened to "dilution is the solution to pollution"?)

Imagine, salt is a pollutant in the ocean!

To the dismay of Surfriders and Coast Watchers — the environmental groups which petitioned the State Water Resources Board — the board ruled for sanity. Of course, there are many more hurdles to be cleared — the Surfriders Foundation then petitioned the California Coastal Commission.

Delay upon delay upon delay. The Coastal Commission staff voted to disapprove the project — but faced with a public outcry when shortages actually happen, the Coastal Commission caved, and approved the project with many restrictions and financial extortion that will raise the rates the people must pay.

The Poseidon plant, if it is ever built, will not kill additional ocean life because it will take as intake water the discharge of the Carlsbad power plant. Whatever fish kill there is will have already happened at the power

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plant intake.

California needs more than just water. It needs sanity in judicial matters, and a federal judge ruling that Delta Smelt has priority over humans is not judicial sanity. California needs regulatory sanity, and delay after delay in getting water to the people is not regulatory sanity.

And, finally, California needs some sanity on its "water authorities" boards. To their credit, almost all dozen or so water authorities in San Diego County want the Poseidon desalinization plant and have agreed to purchase the water — but the water authorities were passive in developing the water source.

Finding water on this earth is not a hard job, not even finding potable water. Some places have too much water, some too little. Water has been the bane of the West since pioneer days, and many have died trying to find it or get to it.

In the age of technology, we can solve the problem. We can start by not placing federal laws on the books that hamstring judges into protecting fish over people.

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