



MARINA COAST WATER DISTRICT

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LAWSUIT CONTRADICTS CAL-AM'S STATED INTENTION TO BUILD BRIDGES WITH MARINA

Cal-Am touts outreach even as it seeks to invalidate city's groundwater sustainability plan

MARINA, Calif.–October 5, 2020: In a [September 19 guest commentary](#) in the *Monterey County Herald*, Rich Svindland, president of California American Water (Cal-Am), indicated that Cal-Am would like to build bridges with the Marina community and do more to address concerns about the water company's proposed desalination plant. But within days of Svindland's published commentary, Cal-Am served the city of Marina with a lawsuit challenging the city's groundwater sustainability plan and its role as a groundwater sustainability agency.

In the *Herald* Svindland stated, "We want to hear from the city and others if there are constructive ways to build bridges and to bring them on board with this important water solution." The commentary aimed to explain the reason Cal-Am abruptly withdrew its permit application for the desal project from the California Coastal Commission. "It became obvious that we needed to take more time to address objections raised by the community of Marina," said Svindland, "namely that our project would be built in their backyard without them receiving any benefit from it."

The lawsuit, however, reveals the underlying hypocrisy in Svindland's message of outreach, and suggests that Cal-Am has no true intention of collaborating with Marina. In the "reverse validation" complaint, Cal-Am challenges Marina's groundwater sustainability plan, which was developed and approved by the city under California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Notably, Cal-Am itself has no groundwater rights for the proposed desal project.

Marina is committed to sustainable groundwater management, and one of the city's primary objections to the desal project is the potential for slant wells to increase saltwater intrusion into

the fresh water aquifers that supply Marina and surrounding communities. A Stanford research study published this year used advanced airborne electromagnetic (AEM) technology to present the best evidence to date for both 1) the presence of sustainable fresh water in the Marina aquifers, and 2) the likelihood of slant wells leading to greater saltwater intrusion.

Dozens of community organizations and elected officials in Marina, Monterey County, and statewide were prepared to speak against the desal project at a special Commission hearing scheduled for September 17. Cal-Am withdrew its permit application the day prior, however, and the Commission cancelled the meeting. An August 25 Commission staff report had already recommended denial of the Cal-Am project, citing serious environmental justice issues and adverse effects on Marina's coastal resources. The staff report instead advocated expansion of the Pure Water Monterey groundwater replenishment project as a viable alternative.

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About Marina Coast Water District and MCWD Groundwater Sustainability Agency

The Marina Coast Water District (MCWD) was formed in 1960 as the Marina County Water District by a group of local citizens. It was first a municipal-owned water system with boundaries to coincide with the existing Marina Fire District. In 1966, voters authorized the sale of water bonds to acquire a privately-owned water company serving the area. With the closure of the Fort Ord military base in 1997, the Army contracted MCWD to operate its water and wastewater systems and, in 2001, officially transferred the systems to MCWD. Today, MCWD is an exclusive groundwater sustainability agency (GSA) in both the Monterey sub-basin and the 180/400 sub-basin, responsible for developing groundwater sustainability plans. MCWD is governed by a five-member board of directors elected by the voters. For more information, please visit www.mcwd.org.