

## AG Town Hall Questions 10.20.22

### Via Email:

1. I suspect you will give an update on SIGMA related matters in our area? There is erroneous information (politically charged) among members of the public about where water comes from.
2. I hope that it is pointed out how many irrigation system upgrades and water reductions that Ojai's farmers have made over the decades; all at our expense while water rates have risen. (The public needs to hear that if the press/public is in attendance). Thank you.
3. It should also be recognized that valley wide we have always been self-sufficient in acquiring, moving and paying for our water; much of it originally spurred by agriculture and larger land owners. Keeping it local is a good thing. I do not think anyone in agriculture in Ojai is interested or can afford imported/State water. I do hope that the costs currently being incurred for such connections are allocated to urban and recreational uses, not ag.
4. Lastly, why can't CMWD allocations be exchanged/shared between parcels? Is this a federal or state ruling? Friend's Ranches has 2 agricultural water meters on separate non-contiguous properties. One property has a large allocation and the other does not. This disparity forces us to "under-farm" one property while on the other property we could be wasteful and not be penalized for doing so. It seems to us that CMWD and our community would benefit from farms having enough water to adequately farm with rather than having disparities between allocations. You are well aware that although we appreciate the annual water allocation (rather than monthly), it does get rather tense during years of almost continuous irrigation; divvying the water out in the cooler months so that when June through September roll around we have the resources to cope with dry and windy weather. This lack of sufficient water means that even good farmers are managing some properties poorly, which is both wasteful of water and leaving potentially fire prone groves while not growing enough harvestable crop to be economically sustainable. In the last few years you can observe some of these orchards have dried completely, no longer drawing water and posing as pest and fire risks to adjacent properties. It would be useful to be able to 'bank' a portion of our allocation if trees are replaced or stumped. We recognize that some farmers want to be secretive about their water use and keep what allocation they have; yet we feel a readjustment of allocations based on farm size and crop grown would benefit agriculture in our valley over the longterm, reduce fire hazards and allow farmers to farm more effectively. Being able to transfer allocation from one property to another would allow farmers another planning tool and lead to more efficient water use.

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## In-person AG Meeting Questions

**Question:** What projects are planned to deal with water supply?

**MF:** A couple of projects we are working on, one is the Ventura- Santa Barbara Counties intertie. Our supply would be about 2,000 AF per year. The other is the State Water Project (SWP) Interconnection. This would connect Camarillo to Ventura and our supply would be about 2,000 to 3,000 AF per year. This would be an indirect supply to the City of Ventura as opposed to them taking their allocation out of the Lake.

These connections would avail us of our State Water Project water that we've been signed up for since 1971. This would allow us to connect to the overall state and provide opportunities for other water supplies, not just our SWP allocation.

We are looking at a project for doing a vertical bore down into what is called, Matilija Formation. It's about a mile down. It is fractured bedrock, but it could provide emergency water supply. As much as 8,000 AF in a particular year. We are looking to apply for a grant to build that project.

**Question:** Can you state the price per AF for imported water. How will it pass through to us?

**MF:** That is expensive water. The first thing to realize is that there's no way the AG community could afford this as a 100% replacement. If we get to the point where all water we have is what's coming through is to these two connections (Ventura-Santa Barbara Counties Intertie, North & SWP Interconnection, South or some facsimile thereof, it's just too expensive for the AG community to afford. Our idea right now is to maintain as much water in the lake as we could by replacing a supply of about 1,500 AF per year. That would be 1,500 AF of possibly 12,000-13,000 AF in a particular year. We are looking at a rate structure that would support that and everyone would be paying. As far as the amount of the cost of that water, we're looking at a variable cost of somewhere right around \$2,000 per AF.

**Question:** Is that what the customer would be paying?

**MF:** It would be part of an overall water supply portfolio. We would meld that in, so it would be a piece of this pie you'd be getting.

**Question:** Do the declines in 2012 coincide with fish releases or Ventura City increases?

**MF:** The rainfall at that time period has been really the driver of why that has been in decline. And I will say, you saw the graph that shows how well you this community has done. All of the other classifications have done just as well. Our resale customers like the City of Ventura have cut their water use significantly. The average citizen has been responding to this drought and answering the call to conserve.

**Question:** Aren't the State Water hook ups dependent on there being water within the State Water Project?

**MF:** SWP is about opportunities, not guarantees. You have to manage supply and be prepared for dry times by storing water when it's available.

**Question:** How many have cut to save Stage 3 verses some going to zero use?

**MF:** We could look that up, we've had people basically stop using our water. I would imagine the response that we saw from AG customers is that people are probably getting rid of crops. Some may have taken a well that wasn't previously cost effective to put in place and got it up and running again.

**Question:** Have you surveyed how people [AG] have changed their use?

**MF:** No we haven't. We get crop reports, but we don't compare them year to year.

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**Question:** Are we considering a banking program?

**MF:** We do not have a banking program. I don't think it's a bad idea, but my recommendation would be we allow carry over just for the next year so you would have to use it. My worry is we would build up deficits and you [AG Customer] made plans to be able to have that water and it's not available.

**Question:** Do you have accurate lake topography?

**MF:** We do. We did a survey in 2017. I think it underestimates the lake level just a little bit. It dropped it from 254,000 AF to 238,000 AF. The survey should probably be redone and it's about \$125K to do that study.

**Question:** What percentage of demand is Ag?

**MF:** About 50%

**Question:** What will you do about the revenues as water use goes down?

**MF:** We have had adequate reserves and fixed charges that have helped. We'll need to incorporate this into next rate study.

**Question:** Where do we get cut off if there is a Stage 6?

**MF:** The Stage 6 discussion is important because we wanted to show that there needs to be some sharing going on. We did at one point of the previous version of the WEAP where Stage 5 meant no outside watering and by inference meant no agricultural watering. We took that out because we didn't think that was a responsible thing to do. I think it's upon the District to notify you as far out in advance when we are going to do Stage 6, and cutting you off would be when we are depending on outside sources of water to keep water for health and safety.

**Question:** What about Desal?

**MF:** A couple things on desal, it's enormously expensive to construct and takes a long time. Desal for Ventura County needs to be a regional project so folks like Calleguas who depend on a lot of imported State Water, we would need to partner with them.

**Question:** For meters that are gravity out of the lake that are declining in pressure, is there a plan to deal with that?

**MF:** Yes, there is a scenario where we have trouble with our main pumping plant. We have one community now that we are installing a booster pump for that issue closer to Casitas Dam. Overall, though, we're pretty good. We have a decision point down the road to implement something to get additional pumps in if we need them.

**Question:** Can all allocation figures be online?

**MF:** I'll have to look and see if you can see your individual bill with allocation online. Will we publish all our customer allocations online? No, just in the aggregate.

**Question:** Is CMWD ready for debris if we get rain?

**MF:** Yes, we have made modifications out at Robles fish passage and diversion facility. We added additional brushes. We are working with regulators right now to install screens with different orientation. We need some water to test those out and show they aren't going to hurt the fish. In 2019 we had a couple of contractors help us with clearing out sediment in the forebay.

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**Question:** Total acreage versus the acre feet and figure out AF per acre we are using each year?

**MF:** Yeah that would be a decent study. I've always had a number in my head that we have about 5,000 acres of planted crop, but it's probably less than that now. It might be closer to 4,000 acres.

**Question:** I remember a couple of years back we started getting rains and Robles was not ready to receive flows. Is that the case for this rain season?

**MF:** Not at all. There are times when we aren't going to take water and the river can be full. We have to look at the water quality that's in that river. It could be full of branches, rocks, and silt. It looks like black asphalt going down. That is going to damage our facility. All we will end up doing is clogging screens. Even if we didn't have screens we would be putting a whole bunch of silt in the lake and that just doesn't make sense. So, what we try to do is wait for that real big flush to come through. We usually get one right at the beginning of the season and flush out all that dirt and debris. Then we get that continuous flow that comes down and hopefully divert all the way through May.