

Alford, Patrick

From: jskinnermd [jskinnermd@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, November 04, 2011 7:56 PM
To: Alford, Patrick
Subject: Banning Ranch dEIR comment

RE: Availability of water supply for the proposed Banning Ranch development

Not long ago, our Newport Beach community was informed of a severe statewide draught and all residents were asked to cut back on the use of water in their homes and landscaping in order for the City to meet the water purveyors' restrictions. We were told fines for the City would follow if the required decrease in water use citywide was not achieved. As I recall, we were told we needed to achieve a 15 percent decrease in water use.

At the same time the Newport Beach City Council received a presentation from a consultant regarding projected water availability for the proposed Banning Ranch development expected to include 1375 new residential dwelling units, 75,000 feet of commercial uses, and a 75-unit resort hotel. The consultant assured the City Council that there would be enough water for the Banning Ranch development by listing various sources that were not currently available but that he anticipated would be available later! For instance, he cited a proposed desalination plant that is very controversial and may never be built. He also mentioned the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) that is currently treating wastewater to the drinking water level as a possible future source. However, he seemed not to be aware that the efforts to ask people to conserve has resulted in less wastewater available to turn into drinking water. I am told the GWRS is only at 60 percent of capacity due to a reduction in the source water. That means they have the capacity to treat more wastewater but they cannot do so because conservation has cut down on the available source. So to count on the GWRS for future water supply seems short sighted to me. Somewhat the same situation is occurring with the diminishing volume of flows coming down the Santa Ana River due to conservation efforts by upstream cities. The Santa Ana River water is the principle source of water for recharging the Orange County aquifers. It seems like a Catch 22 situation to me -- the more people conserve, the less useable water we have available from reclaimed sources. I think one needs to plan for dry years while hoping for wet years!

All of the above strongly suggests that the availability of future water will actually be less than anticipated by the consultant. There are water quality professionals who have serious concerns about our future water supply. These uncertainties raise important questions regarding the availability of water for future residential needs. Newport Beach has made a considerable financial commitment to encourage its citizens to conserve water. It doesn't make sense to me to ask residents to conserve while at the same time making a determination that there is plenty of water for large future developments.

Nancy Skinner
1724 Highland Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92660