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Panel studies water supply
Coalition expects rise in demand
 BY JIM SKEEN, Staff Writer

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PALMDALE - To address a growing demand for water, a coalition of water providers and municipal and county government officials is trying to come up with a plan that will more than double supplies by the year 2035.

The Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Group is working to create a plan to help guide the management of water supplies, water quality, flood management, and even environmental resource and land-use planning. The plan will also be used to help secure federal and state grants for water-related projects.

"This is one document that touches all water issues," said Ken Kirby, a water consultant hired to help guide the development of the plan.

It is projected the demand for water will reach approximately 389,000acre-feet annually by the year 2035, but the projected supply will only be about 191,000acre-feet. In a severe drought year, the shortfall could range from 249,000to 286,000acre-feet per year.

An acre-foot is enough to serve two average-size families for a year, according to the state Department of Water Resources.

"Given the deficit you are facing, you are going to have to pull out all the stops," Kirby said.

Another challenge to address

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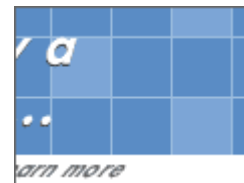
is the fact that much of the region's water supplies are imported from Northern California. The amount of water available from the State Water Project can vary on weather conditions from 65percent of the region's total in typical years to as little as 35percent in drought years.

The coalition is composed of the Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency, Palmdale and Quartz Hill water districts, Littlerock Creek Irrigation District, Antelope Valley State Water Contractors Association, the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, County Sanitation Districts 14 and 20, Rosamond Community Services District and Los Angeles County Waterworks District 40.

"We believe this process is getting us together," said Adam Ariki, assistant division engineer for county waterworks districts. "We are communicating better than we have in the past."

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At a meeting Wednesday in Palmdale, the coalition began forming the initial objectives and targets for the plan. The first objective the group agreed to was to provide a reliable water supply to meet the region's needs through 2035 by providing new water supplies and reducing demand through conservation.

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Another goal is to develop a contingency plan to provide water during a disruption of state water deliveries for a period of at least six months.

And a third goal was to stabilize groundwater levels to current conditions. Groundwater overdraft, and resulting land subsidence, have been issues in the region for several years.

The group wants to complete the document this year. It will most likely require being updated every five to 10 years to account for differences between projections and what actually occurs.

"We do not know what's going to happen in 2035," Kirby said. "We are doing a prudent, plausible projection of what will happen."

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