

Agencies meet deadline for water plan approval

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QUARTZ HILL - A regionwide plan to keep the Antelope Valley stocked with a sufficient supply of quality drinking water made Monday's deadline when Quartz Hill Water District board members approved the plan.

Quartz Hill Water District was the last of 11 lead agencies for the Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to adopt the document, which proposes numerous projects aimed at ensuring a reliable water supply for Valley residents and businesses now and in the future.

In addition to focusing on water banking, water conservation, flood control, recycled water use and habitat restoration projects, the plan is a tool that could help the region obtain state and federal funding for certain projects.

"We made the deadline," said Chad Reed, the water district's general manager.

"The basis of having (a) special meeting was to make that deadline," he pointed out, referring to the fact that the Department of Water Resources required all 11 lead agencies to adopt the plan in order to compete for as much as \$25 million in a state grant.

At the special meeting Thursday night, Quartz Hill water board directors voted 3-0 in favor of the plan, Reed said.

Board Vice President James Powell was out of town and board President Allen Flick "couldn't get to the meeting," Reed said, noting Flick was "snowed in in (the) Santa Clarita Valley" where he works.

Following a 30-minute discussion that highlighted basics of the plan, Reed said board member Mike Scott moved to adopt the plan, and newly elected director Chris Gross seconded the motion.

Reed said board members saw all the proposed projects "as necessary steps" to accomplish the goal of water reliability.

None of the directors were worried about some erroneous information spread around town that the plan involved "toilet-to-tap" projects.

The Quartz Hill Water District board "understood very well that the plan had nothing of that nature in it," Reed said.

Furthermore, "we're excited about the possibility that Ken Kirby will be staying on and working with us to advance this plan."

Kirby, of Kirby Consulting Group Inc. in Northern California, had been the facilitator at some 19 stakeholder meetings for the past year and a half - meetings that brought together representatives from all the water companies and some mutual water providers in the Valley as well as representatives from county, state and federal agencies.

Representatives from Los Angeles County also expressed satisfaction with the plan and the ability of stakeholders - each with its own specific needs - to unite for a common purpose.

"The county applauds the efforts of all the parties to work together and to look at the plan as a milestone in the water picture of the Antelope Valley," said Adam Ariki, assistant deputy director of Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts.

"We're grateful for Supervisor (Michael D.) Antonovich's leadership, and we thank the politicians for raising questions, evaluating the information and making an informed decision to move ahead with the (plan)."

To ensure that the plan arrived at Department of Water Resources offices in Sacramento by Monday's deadline, Lauren Everett, an environmental scientist with Kennedy/Jenks Consultants in Ventura, hopped aboard an airplane and hand-delivered the document by noon that day.

Everett said an online portion of the document was submitted to the state agency at 11:30 p.m. Sunday.

"We were here working late. It was an amazing effort," Everett said. "We worked very hard, but we feel very confident that we put together a very strong application for the region, demonstrating our need for water resource planning."

The Antelope Valley plan is competing against four others in Southern California, Everett said. A total of \$51 million was designated for water supply projects in Southern California, but the maximum amount any one region can receive is \$25 million.

Although at this point everyone is keeping their fingers crossed, Everett said, "I think we will do favorably. I'm very proud of the application. It's a great accomplishment for the region."

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