



2 companies vie for water project in North Valleys

Reno Gazette-Journal (NV) - Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Author: Final Edition, Susan Voyles, Staff

By Susan Voyles

RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Two companies are vying for Washoe County's attention to import water to the North Valleys.

The county commission heard Tuesday from Bob Marshall of Intermountain Water Supply, who detailed piping water to Stead and Lemmon Valley, using 3,500 acre-feet of water a year from Dry Valley and Bedell Flats. That's enough to supply 3,500 homes.

Next Tuesday, the commission will hear from Vidler Co. officials, who are interested in supplying 10,734 acre feet of water a year from the Fish Springs Ranch in the Honey Lake basin.

The Vidler project is a downsized version of the Honey Lake water importation project that was killed a decade ago and would provide only for growth already approved.

Later this winter, the county commission wants to hold a workshop involving citizen groups, staff and regional water planners to weigh the pros and cons of the two water supply proposals.

"We really need water in the North Valleys," said Commissioner Bonnie Weber, who represents the area. "We need to look at this seriously again."

In the North Valleys, the only major growth that has occurred is in Stead, which is part of the city of Reno. But that could soon end as a large water line carrying Truckee River water to Stead is near capacity, said Steve Bradhurst, Washoe County water resource department director.

As a more immediate solution, he said, ways are being studied to save water by coordinating water service provided by the county and the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the main localsupplier.

A lack of water is behind a 31-year moratorium on subdividing land in Lemmon Valley and has stalled plans to industrialize land at the Stead Airport. Residents in the Heppner subdivision in Lemmon Valley and other subdivisions worry about falling water levels in their wells.

The regional water management plan adopted in 1997 urges county officials to "aggressively pursue" importing water for the North Valleys, freeing water for the Truckee River for Reno and Sparks.

But in July 1998, the county commission ordered its staff not to spend any money on studying importing water, leaving it to developers to gather a myriad of studies and approvals before the first foot of pipe is laid.

Lydia Andrews-Jones, a Red Rock Estates homeowner, said pumping 500 acre-feet of water from Bedell Flats would affect her neighborhood, which sits up on a mountain rim above the flat.

"There are 50 homes there and more going up every day," Andrews-Jones. "I do know water flows downhill. If our wells start going dry, they should recharge the groundwater at no cost to us."

Commissioner Pete Sferrazza, who represents north Reno, said he would not support any plan that created new water shortages.

A former Reno mayor, he voted against the Honey Lake importation project in the early 1990s because of the growth it would bring to the North Valleys.

And he said he would be "real reluctant" to approve any importation project if it means converting 40-acre lots to one-third acre lots in the unincorporated county where residents pay no extra taxes for most of their municipal services.

In other water issues, the commission approved a wholesale agreement with TMWA to supply up to 2,000 gallons a minute, or 2.88 million gallons a day, to provide for growth over the next five years to the southeast Truckee Meadows.

A new water treatment plant using creek water and well water containing arsenic will be built before the agreement ends, Bradhurst said. Arsenic would be removed in treatment.

For the unincorporated area of Spanish Springs, the county commission approved a \$730,100 contract with Stantec Consulting for a study and preliminary design for a new sewer plant serving up to 8,000 homes.

The study would determine whether the plant would be cheaper for new and existing residents than connecting with the main Reno-Sparks sewer plant. And it would also identify a site and the land costs. At least 20 acres could be purchased for the settling ponds.

Bradhurst said Stantec's initial recommendation would be to build the plant in the foothills, far away from homes.

Not archived: map by S. Reich/RGJ

Section: Reno Sparks

Page: 1C

Record Number: ren2003121019087903

Copyright (c) Reno Gazette-Journal. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.