

Commentary  
The Monterey County Herald

The Del Monte Forest Property Owners (DMFPO), representing a majority of residents in Pebble Beach, supports the Pebble Beach Company plan to make water available on the Monterey Peninsula without any cost to taxpayers.

The Wastewater Reclamation Project upgrade proposal is a win-win solution to a serious problem. \$150,000 an acre-foot – the cost to produce water from the project – is high. But those on the water waiting lists will only pay \$19,200 an acre-foot – the present going rate -- and it is very probably the only way to make a significant amount of “new” water available on the Peninsula.

All of the money generated by this proposal will go to public agencies to upgrade publicly owned water facilities. No money goes to the Pebble Beach Company. There is no profiteering involved in this proposal.

There are several other benefits to this plan. It will actually decrease the draw on the Carmel River aquifer, thus helping protect the environment, golf courses will have higher quality irrigation water without using potable water, and the project will be completed at no cost to taxpayers.

What are the alternatives?

- Taxpayer money, an estimated \$21 million, would be needed to fix the current shortfall of the Wastewater Reclamation Project.
- Or, if the plan is not approved, the Peninsula will continue to be stymied by the lack of “new” water: additional water would be unavailable for existing lots and remodeling, use of potable water would continue on golf courses, and the Carmel River would not benefit from this additional water savings.

A little history.

For years, golf courses and other open space recreational areas in Pebble Beach used more than 800 acre-feet of potable water for irrigation. In 1994, the Wastewater Reclamation Project was completed to convert this irrigation primarily to reclaimed water.

Three governmental agencies, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD), the Carmel Area Wastewater District, and the Pebble Beach Community Services District operate the Project. The Pebble Beach Company (PBC) provided the financial guarantee for \$34 million in bonds that paid for the Project.

In return for the guarantee, Cal- Am and the MPWMD granted the PBC an entitlement of 365 acre-feet of potable water freed up by the Project. The MPWMD was to get 420

acre-feet of potable water for the public's benefit. The State Water Resources Control Board, the agency causing the MPWMD to stop allocating other water from the Carmel River aquifer, has recently reaffirmed this entitlement.

Unfortunately, the project has generated average savings of only 600 acre-feet of potable water, principally because the reclaimed water with present conservation practices is too salty to meet the MPWMD contractual requirements for use on the golf courses.

Improving the quality of the reclaimed water with a small desalination facility at the Carmel treatment plant and renovating storage at the existing Forest Lake Reservoir can correct this shortfall. \$21 million would increase the use of reclaimed water by about 300 acre-feet per year.

To fund these public facility improvements, PBC has offered to sell up to 105 acre-feet of its entitlement water to residential property owners within the Del Monte Forest at about \$150,000 an acre-foot, the pro-rata cost of the project (\$55M / 365AF). It will also grant another 45 acre-feet to the MPWMD for them to distribute for residences and existing lots on various water waiting lists at the present rate for new allocations (\$19,200 per acre-foot).

This is a true win-win-win-win situation: 1) water for individuals who voluntarily want to participate for building or remodeling, 2) water saved for the Carmel River, 3) higher quality reclaimed water for some of the Peninsula's premier attractions, its golf courses, and 4) all at no cost to taxpayers.

This matter will be brought before the MPWMD in the coming weeks where they are attempting to identify projects that could ease the area's water shortage. We urge the community to let their elected representatives at the MPWMD know they agree with us in supporting this creative and fair proposal.

Paul Woudenberg  
President, Del Monte Forest Property Owners

*Paul Woudenberg has been the chaplain for the Robert Louis Stevenson School for 17 years, where he also teaches ethics. He is on the Board of the Church in the Forest, and has been the announcer for the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance (the "Voice of the Concours") for 23 years.*

The MPWMD division directors are: Alvin Edwards, Judy Lehman, Molly Erickson, Kris Lindstrom, and Alexander Henson. Dave Potter is the representative from Monterey County and David Pendergrass is the mayoral representative. They may be reached at:

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