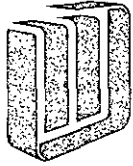


FILED by order
of the Board of Directors of
The Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California
at its meeting held MAY 12 1992

9-8

Baron E. Duff
Executive Secretary

**MWD**

METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

April 28, 1992

To: Board of Directors (Water Problems Committee--Information)
From: General Manager
Subject: Imperial Irrigation District Proposal for Test Water Savings Program

Report

In July 1990, Metropolitan's staff transmitted a conceptual proposal for a Phase II Water Conservation Program to Imperial Irrigation District's (Imperial) Chief Counsel for focusing discussion. At the same time, considering that Imperial had established a committee to consider a land fallowing proposal, Metropolitan suggested that it would be appropriate for Imperial rather than Metropolitan to prepare an initial proposal for that type of program based on its committee's discussions.

Metropolitan entered into an agreement with the University of California to carry out a three-year field study to determine the effects of limited water availability during the summer months on yield and quality of alfalfa grown in the Imperial Valley in November 1990. Forcing alfalfa fields into a dormancy mode through partial or no irrigation during the summer months could be a viable option for water conservation purposes when water is short. Between August and October 1991, Imperial implemented a pilot program to investigate the water savings potential of eliminating the irrigation of alfalfa for 75 days.

In January 1991, Metropolitan proposed entering into formal negotiations as soon as possible for determining the feasibility of entering into an additional agreement to facilitate further water conservation by Imperial. Metropolitan also indicated its willingness to offer Imperial an arrangement similar to that being negotiated with Palo Verde Irrigation District (Palo Verde). During the course of these negotiations, Metropolitan reiterated its view that Imperial should make an initial proposal of this type considering the sensitive nature of such a proposal to the public in the Imperial Valley.

As Metropolitan and Imperial's discussions on a Phase II Water Conservation Program have continued, Imperial

has shown greater interest in a modified irrigation practice program for crops such as alfalfa and a land fallowing program in the Imperial Valley. The latter program would be similar in nature to the proposed Test Land Fallowing Program with Palo Verde under consideration by your Board.

In February 1992, Imperial's Chief Counsel informed Metropolitan that while Imperial was continuing with its environmental/water quality and liability risk assessment for a Phase II Water Conservation Program, Imperial believed that continuing negotiations on such a program would not be fruitful at this time. Imperial cited adoption of the Inland Surface Waters Plan by the State Water Resources Control Board and comments and correspondence received from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region as its rationale. At that time, Imperial proposed implementing a modified irrigation practice program and a land fallowing program (collectively, the test program) that could make 100,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water available to Metropolitan in both 1992 and 1993. Subsequently, representatives of Imperial appeared before your Board's Water Problems Committee on March 9 and April 13 to reiterate its interest.

Imperial's Chief Counsel provided Metropolitan with the principles of an agreement to implement a test program on March 20 and further revised them on April 3. The principles included a provision that permits the saved water to be stored by the United States in Colorado River system reservoir storage for use by Metropolitan prior to the year 2000. While Metropolitan's staff provided Imperial's Chief Counsel with comments on the principles by letter of April 7, it is difficult to evaluate Imperial's proposal until more substance is provided to the principles by Imperial.

Following the appearance of Imperial's representatives before your Board's Water Problems Committee on April 13, Imperial's General Manager requested an indication of Metropolitan's interest in funding the test program in 1992 and 1993, and the magnitude of funding that could be provided. Imperial indicated its willingness to obtain the necessary approvals, administer the test program, and guarantee that 100,000 acre-feet would be made available each year. The approval of Palo Verde, Coachella Valley Water District (Coachella), and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation would be required. A representative of Coachella has indicated verbally that Coachella would not be in a position to approve such an agreement.

I have informed Imperial's General Manager that Metropolitan is interested in moving forward with the type of program that has been outlined. However, a number of matters

must be addressed before a program could be implemented. These include:

- defining specific parameters to assure that water is saved by the test program including a mechanism for determining the program yield,
- obtaining the approval of Coachella,
- evaluating the potential for interference with the implementation of the proposed test land fallowing program with Palo Verde due to heightened, albeit unfounded, concerns regarding the storage of additional saved water in the Colorado River system reservoirs, and
- developing a time schedule outlining the tasks to be accomplished and approvals to be obtained prior to implementation.

Imperial was not provided with an estimate of the magnitude of funding that could be provided for a test program as the program must be further defined and the views of the parties which would approve the agreement must be ascertained. A copy of my April 21, 1992 letter to Imperial is attached (Attachment 1).

In response, Imperial has developed a time schedule identifying the necessary steps and approvals for implementing a test program. The schedule anticipates distributing draft environmental documentation and finalizing an agreement in late May, obtaining the necessary water agency approvals in June, and entering into the agreement in July. The test program would begin in late July. A copy of Imperial's time schedule is also attached (Attachment 2).

I will keep your Board informed of the status of the negotiations undertaken with Imperial.

Board Committee Assignment

This letter is referred for information to the Water Problems Committee because of its authority to study and advise on the sources of importing water required by Metropolitan pursuant to Administrative Code Section 2481(a).

Recommendation

For information only.


Carl Boronkay

JPM:vb

Attachments