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METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

9-6

December 19, 1994

To: Board of Directors (Engineering and Operations Committee--Information)
(Special Committee on Water Quality and
Environmental Compliance--Information)

From: General Manager

Subject: Body-Contact Recreation at the Domenigoni Valley Reservoir Project

Report

Staff expects that, over the next few weeks, members of the Hemet City Council and/or its Ad Hoc Water Contact and Economic Enhancement Committee will contact Board members individually to address the issue of body-contact recreation on the proposed reservoir and its associated economic benefits to the City of Hemet. Body-contact recreation typically means swimming, water skiing, and jet skiing on the proposed reservoir.

This information letter (with attachment) updates your Board on recreation planning and current studies to determine the public health, economic, social, and legal implications of permitting body-contact recreation on the reservoir.

During project planning, Metropolitan developed a conceptual recreation plan that included significant outdoor recreation facilities on project lands below the east and west dams. Reservoir recreation included boating activities that would not result in people coming in direct contact with the water. A recreation management plan is being prepared which would be under the control of Metropolitan and provide continued opportunity for community input during long-term operations. Planning studies found no adverse economic impact on the City of Hemet due to the reservoir.

Body-contact recreation has been excluded at the reservoir for several reasons. The State of California Health and Safety Code prohibits recreation in which there is "bodily contact with the water by any participant on a reservoir in which water is stored for domestic use", subject to certain exceptions on San Diego County reservoirs as well as those on the State Water Project system. Adding body-contact recreation will most likely require additional expenditures to upgrade Metropolitan treatment plants to remove pathogens,

such as Cryptosporidium, that humans could introduce into the water supply. It has also been Metropolitan's practice to prohibit body-contact recreation on its other reservoirs (Lake Mathews and Lake Skinner) to protect public health.

While the planning studies addressed both body-contact recreation and the project's economic impacts, staff is re-studying both issues in great detail to respond to questions raised by Hemet's Ad Hoc Committee in July 1994. These studies are being conducted so that the Board and the public will have comprehensive factual information on the impacts of body-contact recreation. Tentative results of these studies, including the feasibility of body-contact recreation at the proposed reservoir, will be available in late-January 1995. Staff will report this information to the Board in February.

The attachment summarizes the recreation planning process and our current studies on body-contact recreation.

Recommendation

For information only.

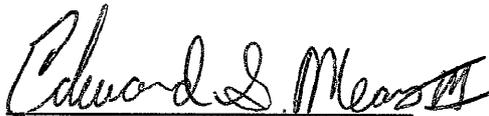
John. R. Wodraska
General Manager

Submitted by:



Gary M. Snyder
Chief Engineer

Concur:



John R. Wodraska
General Manager

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Attachment

ATTACHMENT

Recreation Planning and Current
Studies on Body-Contact Recreation Activities

Following the Board's certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) in October 1991, staff initiated a comprehensive effort to develop a detailed recreation plan based on the FEIR conceptual plan. A key component of this effort was to involve the area public in developing the plan. Accordingly, staff established a recreation working group consisting of 38 people representing area governments, the business community, recreation interests, and special populations. The City of Hemet is represented on the working group.

Between October 1992 and June 1994, the recreation working group met nine times. The first four sessions (between October 1992 and April 1993) were public information meetings intended to discuss the many facets of recreation planning and to solicit general public suggestions on the activities and facilities that the plan should include. Over 100 people attended each meeting. Body-contact recreation activities on the reservoir were among the proposals, just as they had been during the review period of the Draft EIR.

Between September 1993 and April 1994, the recreation working group held four planning workshops to work with staff in developing the plan. The group reached consensus on a draft plan that was mailed to everyone on the project mailing list (over 2,000 people). The working group supported the plan because it will provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities to meet demand, can be implemented within Metropolitan's recreation capital budget, and will produce annual operating revenues at least equal to annual costs. The plan did not include body-contact recreation on the reservoir, but did include body-contact recreation at swimming lagoons located near the west and east dams of the reservoir.

On May 31, 1994, staff held an open house at the site to give people the opportunity to tour future recreation lands. In general, of the approximately 400 people that attended, most seemed enthusiastic about the draft plan. On June 1, 1994, the recreation working group held a workshop to present and receive comments from the general public on the draft plan. Over 150 people attended. While every speaker supported the plan for what it contained, many speakers objected to what it did not contain: body-contact recreation on the reservoir.

Following the workshop, staff has continued to pursue recreation development at the reservoir based on the draft plan. However, in July 1994, some Hemet residents sought the City Council's establishment of a committee to promote reservoir-based body-contact recreation and recreation complex development and

operation to maximize the economic benefit to the City of Hemet. These residents challenged the reasons that Metropolitan and the recreation working group had cited for rejecting body-contact recreation. The City Council established the Water Contact/Economic Enhancement Committee.

The expressed goals of this committee are:

- Full body-contact recreation on the reservoir.
- Vehicular access to picnic areas and campgrounds on the north and south slopes, inside the reservoir.
- Adoption of the name "Lake Domenigoni."
- Full mitigation of increased service costs to the City of Hemet related to serving the lake and recreation areas.
- For Hemet to have an integral role in the management/operation of the recreation areas.
- To aggressively plan, market, and develop the recreational uses to the highest and best land use.
- For Hemet to annex the lake and recreation areas.

Staff takes very seriously the City Council's establishment of the committee, which challenges the direction that staff and the recreation working group have been pursuing with community input. Given the Council's position, staff agreed to study in much more detail the potential public health impacts from body-contact recreation and the recreation complex's economic impacts on the Hemet area with and without reservoir-based body-contact recreation. The study, begun in August 1994, is in two (and perhaps three) phases. Staff has contracted with some of the most eminent scientists in the country to study the public health impacts and a major economics firm to project the economic impacts. The results of the study will give the Board the information it needs to determine whether body-contact recreation is feasible and desirable on the reservoir.

Phase 1, completed in September 1994, focused on assembling information from published sources on the public health impacts of body-contact recreation and projecting the recreation complex's economic benefits with and without body-contact recreation. Documented public health studies clearly establish a relationship between human contact with the water and human illness. Economically, the draft recreation plan without body-contact recreation would, by the year 2010, annually inject

about \$70 million into the local economy through direct spending by recreation users and related indirect expenditures in the surrounding community. A plan with body-contact recreation would increase the annual economic benefit by about 8 percent. Phase 1 economic studies did not address the potential economic liability to the recreation management entity from recreation accidents associated with body-contact activities.

On October 6, 1994, staff presented the results of Phase 1 to the public in the tenth meeting of the recreation working group. Over 100 people attended the meeting. Except for representatives of the City of Hemet, working group members continued to support the draft plan. Hemet representatives and some other people attending the meeting challenged a number of the Phase 1 public health and economic data conclusions.

Phase 2, begun in October 1994, emphasizes efforts to: (1) apply known information about the public health impacts of body-contact recreation to the unique characteristics of the new reservoir in order to project the likely risks from such recreation to downstream water consumers; (2) determine the cost that our customers would have to bear, if any, to upgrade our treatment facilities (particularly in light of more stringent federal drinking water standards); and (3) reevaluate the economic benefits of a recreation complex with and without body-contact recreation.

Studies of the public health risks are evaluating potential pathogen loading from five recreation activities on the reservoir, including: (1) non-body contact boating and fishing only, (2) minimal body-contact boating such as small sailboats and canoes, (3) water skiing, (4) jet skiing, and (5) swimming. In general, activities involving full body-contact result in release of pathogens. Consequently, increasing numbers of full body-contact recreators results in greater pathogen loading into the reservoir.

Staff expects to complete Phase 2 in late-January 1995 and report the results to the public in a recreation working group meeting and to the Board of Directors in February. Staff expects the results to lead to a determination of the extent to which body-contact recreation is feasible, if at all.

If the results are inconclusive or require a greater degree of precision, a third study phase may be necessary to sample, analyze, and compare contaminants in water from existing reservoirs in the State of California (and perhaps other states) that currently provide and do not provide various levels of body-contact recreation. This phase, which could cost at least \$300,000, would take about 18 months, from May 1995 to October 1996, in order to collect samples over two peak recreation seasons.

At present, the City's Ad Hoc Committee does not appear to be willing to wait for the results of staff's efforts to determine the facts at issue for the Board to make a decision on body-contact recreation. Staff knows that, in addition to the Council's December 13 consideration of the proposal (now deferred) for the city to fund a study to determine the reservoir's highest recreation use (defined in terms of economic benefit to the area), the City's committee is seeking support for its position from state legislators and the body-contact-recreating public.

Body-contact recreation on domestic water supply reservoirs has been politically and publicly debated in the State of California since the late 1950's. For the most part, the major domestic water supply agencies in the state (with the exception of those in San Diego County and the State Water Project) have opposed and continue to resist proposals to provide body-contact recreation on domestic water supply reservoirs.

Staff's current study appears to be the first time in the state (and perhaps the nation) to develop comprehensive and factual information on the potential public health and economic impacts from body-contact recreation on a domestic water supply reservoir to water consumers. Staff is attempting to maintain a neutral position on the issues until factual information is available from current studies.

Factors to consider in assessing the issue of body-contact recreation at the proposed reservoir include:

- Water consumer attitudes (either favorable or unfavorable) toward body-contact recreation in domestic water reservoirs,
- The risk to the health of downstream consumers from body-contact recreation in the new reservoir,
- The expected more stringent drinking water standards from EPA,
- The cost of additional treatment and liability that body-contact recreation might require,
- The potential need to prepare a Supplemental EIR on body-contact recreation, and
- How a decision might affect Metropolitan's or other water agencies' prohibition of body-contact recreation at existing reservoirs.