

## **Letter to the Editor, The Cambrian—July 29, 2010**

### **Growth, cost concerns**

Did I miss something? Wasn't the desalination plant that is proposed for Cambria supposed to be used exclusively to supply water in case of emergencies? That is, when the aquifers from which we draw water become so low as to risk salt-water intrusion.

Letters to The Cambrian would suggest otherwise, including one written by Greg Sanders, Cambria Community Services District board president, in June 24 issue ( "Desal cost factors").

He states in his explanation of the financial impact of a desal plant on Cambria water ratepayers that, "... an increase in water connection fees for new hookups (with total hookups not to exceed the CCSD established growth cap of 4,650 residential units), the financial impact on existing CCSD customers to build the desalination plant will be minimal."

Does this mean there will be an instant development plan implemented to build out our village before we even have a desal plant up and running? If so, then Jeff Hellman's Viewpoint ( "How do you value Cambria? — or, Value and values") in the same issue may be entirely correct in predicting overcrowding, gridlock and congestion.

A rapid growth of our village would stress every infrastructure in town to the max. For one example, with a significant increase in traffic, just where will we park to visit the post office or the pharmacies or any of our other frequently used businesses? Coupled with the usual influx of tourists, we might as well walk.

Mr. Hellman goes on to discuss the ultimate cost of a desalination plant. Presumably in response, Mr. Sanders stated that, besides new hookups, Federal assistance will be the additional source of funding. Of course, this begs the questions— what if the Feds say "no"? That, and the proposed involvement with the Army Corps of Engineers who are famous (notorious) for underestimating the expense of their building projects could drive the costs way beyond what Mr. Sanders described as a "minimal" impact to existing CCSD customers.

Mr. Sanders concludes by stating, "I am confident we can produce desalinated water for approximately the same cost associated with the current pumping and transmission of ground water."

Sorry, Mr. Sanders, but being confident is a long way from guaranteeing our rates won't go up and go up astronomically.

Of course, there is another way to increase revenue, especially given the fact that the proposed desal plant will be modular in form. Need more water? Add another module. The means to such an increase in revenue is one that causes L.A. and Orange county developers to salivate— that is an extension of the Cambria urban reserve line. By purchase of farmers' and ranchers' property or by appropriation (seizing) by means of negative declarations Cambria could increase in size, 10, 25, 50 —maybe even 100 percent. Just think about all the new lots with all their connection fees to pay for all the more water production.

In that event, Mr. Hellman will be quite right when he describes the "natural crown jewels" of so many California coastal villages being decimated, defaced and degraded.

**Dennis Ortenburger**

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