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May 8, 2013

Mayor and Council Members
Santa Cruz City Council
809 Center Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Chair and Board Members
Soquel Creek Water District
P.O. Box 1550
Capitola, CA 95010

RE: City and District Membership in and Support For CalDesal

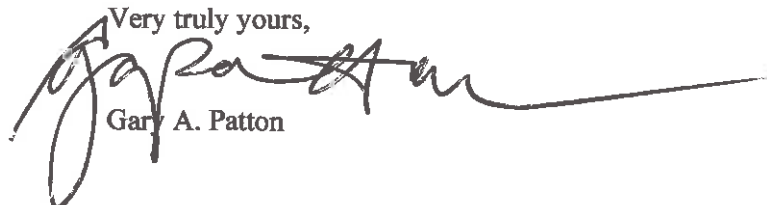
Dear Council Members and Board Members:

This letter is to follow up on the comments I made at your joint study session, held last night. I believe that I am correct that both the City and the Soquel Creek Water District have used public (and/or ratepayer) funds to join and support CalDesal (<http://www.caldesal.org>). I know the City has. CalDesal is an “advocacy” group, according to its own self-presentation, and describes itself as “*solely dedicated* to advancing the use of desalination (emphasis added).” The group makes it a point of pride that it has a “narrow focus” in support of desalination. The City’s Water Director, the person most centrally in charge of the proposed desalination project being sponsored by the City and the District, is or was an officer of CalDesal.

The essence of the environmental review process, as described by the presenters at your joint study session, is the opposite of an “advocacy” process. Among other things, it is supposed to provide a genuine and thoroughgoing analysis of both the proposed project and alternatives to the proposed project. As agencies that are financing an industry-sponsored effort to “advocate” for advancing the use of desalination, and to make desalination the “narrow focus” of its efforts, it is hard for the City and the District to present themselves as “neutral” trustees of what should be a fair and open (not “narrowly focused”) process. The Draft EIR will, of course, speak for itself as to whether it actually analyzes potentially feasible alternatives to desalination, or whether it aims mainly at analyzing various alternative ways to accomplish desalination (They are quite different, of course). Even if the EIR soon to be released is a model, the credibility of the City and District is very much compromised by your membership in and financial support for CalDesal, and for allowing the staff person most in charge of the project, a public employee, to serve as an officer of this advocacy group.

This letter is my request that the Council and the District direct their staffs to place an item on their public agendas, to consider whether or not to withdraw from, or to continue to participate in, the CalDesal advocacy group, thus allowing the public to comment. It is my hope that both agencies will then vote to withdraw their memberships and all financial support for this advocacy effort, and require their staff members to sever any relationship they have with this organization, pending a decision by the City and the District on whether or not to build a desalination facility as per the current proposal.

Very truly yours,



Gary A. Patton

cc: City of Santa Cruz Water Director
Other interested persons