

**DESALINATION PLANT:
DESAL DECISION DUE; Coastal panel to rule on Moss Landing
proposal
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By Kevin Howe, staff writer**

The fate of a pilot desalination plant in Moss Landing could be decided next month by the state Coastal Commission.

Pajaro-Sunny Mesa Community Services District received an administrative permit to operate a pilot demonstration of two reverse-osmosis desalination plants at the former Kaiser Refractories site at Moss Landing -- now the Moss Landing Commercial Park -- from Monterey County in March.

But that permit has been appealed to the Coastal Commission, which is reviewing it and expects to issue a staff recommendation at the end of this month and set hearings for its June 14-16 meeting in Santa Rosa, said Alison Dettmer, manager of the Coastal Commission's energy and ocean resources unit.

Appellants Sara Wan of Malibu and the Surfrider Foundation of San Clemente contend that the proposed pilot desalination plant doesn't conform to the county's Local Coastal Program for Moss Landing, which prohibits discharge of contaminants into the county's water.

The project, they say, will discharge contaminants, including "cleaning compounds, coagulants and polymers," and the project has not provided the necessary studies to show their effects on the environment or how they would be avoided or mitigated.

The appellants say that drawing nearly 250,000 gallons per day of seawater from Moss Landing Harbor will affect the harbor, Elkhorn Slough and Monterey Bay because of the water's discharge and because fish and other marine organisms would be sucked into the system through the intake valves that draw water from the harbor.

Pajaro-Sunny Mesa's permit allows operation of a skid-mounted, 4,000-square-foot temporary facility to collect data and let potential customers sample the water.

The two plants on modular mounts, now operating in Carlsbad, which would be trucked to Moss Landing and set up at the site at Highway 1 and Dolan Road.

Peter MacLaggan, senior vice president of Poseidon Resources of San Diego, the plants' developer, said the two pilot plants together would produce 40,000 gallons of fresh water per day, amounting to 44.8 acre feet of water per year, when they are installed in Moss Landing. That would accommodate approximately 179 households per year.

Some water will go to Sunny Mesa customers in Prunedale, said district manager Joe Rosa.

Water for the pilot plant would be provided by seven pumps that once served Kaiser Refractories when seawater was used to make bricks in Moss Landing, he said.

Those pumps can move up to 10 million gallons of water per day, said Sam Bose, general manager of Moss Landing Commercial Park.

The industrial park site contains 27 million gallons of water storage capacity, all of it "infrastructure that would not have to be paid for by the ratepayers," said Pajaro-Sunny Mesa general counsel Marc Del Piero

Nader Agha, owner of the 200-acre commercial park, said he is making two nearby freshwater wells capable of providing 2,100 gallons per minute each as backup for a future desalination plant available to the district.

Poseidon ultimately envisions a full-scale desalination plant on the site that would produce 20 million gallons per day, McLaggan said, or 2,240 acre feet per year, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Another project under way at the property is an experimental biodiesel fuel processing plant. Michael Sack, CEO of Pacific Bio Fuels, said his company is testing methods for processing canola oil and waste restaurant oil by mixing it with ethanol to produce fuel. Ultimately, he said, Pacific Bio Fuels would like to build a plant in Moss Landing to produce 800,000 to 1 million gallons of fuel per year.

At the June hearing, the Coastal Commission will decide whether to take the appeal or not, Dettmer said. If it doesn't, the county permit stands. If it does, the commission would schedule a future hearing on the permit. #

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