



City of Santa Barbara  
Public Works Department

DRAFT

## Interoffice Memorandum

**DATE:** February \_\_\_\_, 2009  
**TO:** Barbara Shelton, Environmental Analyst  
**FROM:** Rebecca Bjork, Water Resources Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Plan Santa Barbara General Plan Update – Notice of Preparation

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On behalf of the Water Resources Division, I am pleased to submit the following comments regarding the scope of analysis outlined in the Plan Santa Barbara Notice of Preparation dated January 15, 2009, with particular attention to water supply issues.

The proposed scope of analysis is sufficiently specific at this point and we understand that more information on appropriate water resources policies will be developed as the process moves forward. We look forward to being part of these discussions and analysis. As you know, we are working on a number of analyses to update information on water demand and our various water supply sources in support of the water supply portion of the EIR and our subsequent update of the City's Long Term Water Supply Program. We expect to provide the results of that analysis to the City's EIR consultant for inclusion in the EIR.

The status of the City's desalination facility has been the subject of discussion lately at meetings of the Water Commission and the Planning Commission. It has been suggested that the facility not be included in the definition of baseline conditions for the purposes of environmental review. It is important to note that the basic infrastructure remains in place and the facility is permitted as a permanent part of the City's water supply. Equally important is the fact that desalination is a part of the City's Long-Term Water Supply Program (LTWSP), which was adopted by the City Council after thorough analysis and environmental review. Accordingly, we believe it is appropriate to include it as a part of the baseline conditions.

Inclusion in the environmental baseline is not to say that we expect that desalination will necessarily maintain its current role in our water supply. We recognize that there are economic and environmental issues associated with desalination, which need to be assessed as a part of the planning process. The same is also true of our other water supplies, to varying degrees, and we will also need to consider the significant economic, environmental, and health impacts of severe drought or other catastrophic water supply interruptions. After thorough review of the above, the City Council will adopt an updated LTWSP to reflect conditions and policies for the next twenty year planning period, including the appropriate role for desalination. We should also note that, given the policies in the current LTWSP, water demand associated with existing City customers may already exceed the water supply available during the historic critical drought without use of desalination. For this reason, it seems imprudent to exclude desalination from the baseline until analysis of alternatives and adoption of new policy has been completed. The many uncertainties about water supply and climate change are another reason why we suggest that it be included in the baseline conditions.

We look forward to a thorough review of the role of desalination along with our other water supply sources as a part of the EIR process. The process will clarify the issues the City Council will consider as it formulates an undated long term water supply plan once the General Plan update has been approved. We are pleased to be working with you to accomplish that.

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cc: Christine F. Andersen, Public Works Director