



July 26, 2021

Wendy Root Askew, Chair
Monterey County Board of Supervisors
168 West Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Subject: Referral 30 Desalination Amendment to County Code 10.72

Dear Chair Askew and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

With regard to *Referral 30 Desalination Amendment to County Code 10.72*, LandWatch Monterey County opposes any effort to amend County Code Section 10.27 to allow or encourage the privatization of desalination projects. Under CEQA, an environmental impact report on proposed changes to Section 10.27 is required prior to consideration of the project by the public or decision making bodies.

Referral 30 states:

This referral seeks to expand entities allowed to own and operate desalination facilities to provide additional water supply while maintaining protections for health & welfare. Adequate water supply in Monterey County is inconsistent. Climate change is predicted to make water supply reliability erratic. In addition, sea water intrusion continues to negatively impact potable groundwater. Referral 2018.09 in 2018 requested review of County Code Section 10.72 to clarify its limits as well as to allow public-private partnership owned/operated desalination facilities. However, the amendment of 10.72 did not occur. This referral requests that 10.72 be amended to allow public-private partnerships, CPUC regulated utilities and entities who deliver desalinated water to a public entity, a municipal water supplier and/or a CPUC regulated utility.

Drinking water is a public resource that should be managed by public agencies, not private companies, including those that are CPUC-regulated. As has become painfully clear, California American Water Company's ("CalAm") proposed \$1.2 billion desalination plant for the Monterey Peninsula is excessively large and expensive because CalAm's profits are driven by capital investment; the more money they sink into a physical plant, the higher their financial return.

Moreover, CalAm has mustered significant political resources to influence the CPUC. In contrast, the public has been at a significant disadvantage dealing with a State agency in San Francisco that has been largely unresponsive to local concerns. As you know, within the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, the electorate voted overwhelmingly to support public ownership and buyout California American Water Company.

We urge you to decline any effort to waste further public time or money on a referral that has no public support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. DeLapa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "DeLapa".

Michael D. DeLapa
Executive Director