



Testimony of  
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Cal-Am Desalination Project  
September 17, 2020 Hearing Before the California Coastal Commission

**Presentation: Pure Water Monterey Expansion (PWM-E) Versus Cal-Am Desalination  
How Recycled Water Can Reduce Coastal Impacts, Comply with the CDO, Save \$1 Billion,  
and Meet the Monterey Peninsula's Water Needs for 30 Years or More**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ffxjx7pVfMo6SLcredfuc-sHIIj7quaw/view?usp=sharing>

**Slide 1 - Title**

Good morning. Michael DeLapa, Executive Director of LandWatch Monterey County. I am also a former member of the Coastal Commission technical staff, author of the Commission's original wetland guidelines, and former interim executive director of the California Ocean Science Trust.

Since 2009, LandWatch has been actively involved in trying to stop illegal water diversions from the Carmel River and provide a new water supply for future growth. During this time, we have focused on finding a supply that is safe, reliable, secure, and affordable, with the least impact on the environment and the greatest benefit to the community. We were an intervenor in the CPUC process and more recently an advocate for expansion of Pure Water Monterey instead of the Cal-Am desalination project.

LandWatch supports your staff's recommendation to deny a coastal development permit for Cal-Am's project. I'm not going to reiterate the facts, the law, and your staff's persuasive analysis. They've done the heavy lifting. But I would like to take you quickly through part of the presentation I emailed previously to put the project in perspective.

## **Slide 2 - What is the Problem?**

Understanding the scale of the problem is critical. The Water Management District calculates that 81 acre-feet of water per year is necessary to meet demand and comply with the CDO. That's less than 1% of the Peninsula's water budget. The Peninsula does not need a billion-dollar, 7200 acre-feet per year desalination plant to address a problem this small. That would be an enormous waste of resources and cost to the local ratepayers.

## **Slide 3 – The Carmel River Is NOT Threatened**

It is important to understand that the Carmel River is no longer threatened. With the first phase of Pure Water Monterey online, there will be excess water for growth and to protect the river. The first and most pressing goal of the CDO has already been addressed.

## **Slide 4 – Trivial Water Needed to Comply with CDO**

But to address customer demand, yes, a trivial amount of water is necessary. As I said 81 acre-feet per year. But it doesn't need to come from desal. Why?

## **Slide 5 PWM Expansion is the Best Solution!**

Because the expansion of Pure Water Monterey by 2,250 acre-feet per year is feasible, less environmentally damaging, lower risk, faster, less costly, and more environmentally just.

## **Slide 6 PWM-E Meets Growth for 30+ Years**

Even with the extremely optimistic demand estimate of **three** times the historic absorption rate, Cal-Am's desal plant won't run at capacity for 80 to 200 years. Let that sink in. Why impose a 1.2 billion dollar project on this community that won't need it for decades when there is a feasible alternative at 1/6 the cost?

Now, I would like to provide some perspective about the arguments you've heard today from Cal-Am and their supporters.

They say desalination is necessary because the Pure Water Expansion would not provide enough water for housing, hotels, and growth. That it doesn't have secure source water. That it's not drought proof.

Well, the Water Management District has addressed all concerns with exacting engineering studies and environmental analysis. Pure Water Monterey has plenty of legally contracted

source water. It's secure. And it's drought proof. There are reams of data refuting each argument that Cal-Am and their supporters have made.

### **Slide 7 Cal-Am Project Hurts Low-Income Families on the Monterey Peninsula**

But in the end it comes down to: who do you believe? A company whose profit depends on large capital investment? Or the data and independent analysis your staff has provided, the dozens of local elected officials who support that analysis, and the majority of Peninsula residents who have already voted in support of a public alternative to Cal-Am?

There is no better example of environmental injustice than this desalination plant, which provides no benefits to Marina, costs ratepayers \$1.2 billion, and makes affordable housing virtually impossible.

### **Slide 8 How Do They Compare?**

Pure Water Monterey Expansion is a feasible and ratepayer-friendly alternative to meet the water needs of Peninsula residents, especially those living in disadvantaged communities.

Please vote to adopt your staff's recommendation and deny Cal-Am's permit for a desalination plant.

### **Slide 9 Elected Officials Endorsing PWM-E**

Here are the elected official who support that recommendation.

### **Slide 10 Others Endorsing PWM-E**

And here are the public agencies and community groups.

### **Slide 11 Conclusion**

Thank you.