

As Valley recycled water plan moves ahead

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LANCASTER — A proposal to build a recycled water system in the Antelope Valley took a step forward Tuesday as Los Angeles County supervisors approved funding for an environmental impact report, the document all major projects need before final planning and construction can begin.

With the supervisors' approval and \$366,000 in funding, Environmental Science Associates Inc. will take about a year to prepare an environmental impact report and environmental assessment of the North Los Angeles/Kern County Regional Recycled Water Project, said Melinda Barrett, a spokeswoman for the county Department of Water and Power's Water Resources Division.

"This contract means the project is actually moving forward," Barrett said, estimating that construction of a recycled water system in Lancaster and Palmdale would start in July 2008.

The project, part of the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan — or the Antelope Valley Water Plan — has been in the works since 2005, Barrett said.

"This is a collaborative project with a long-range vision," she said. "Recycled water can be delivered and used for irrigation throughout the region, but it needs to be a cooperative effort between a number of agencies."

Because the Antelope Valley includes several municipalities and spills over into Kern County, the Department of Public Works has been working with the Quartz Hill Water District, Lancaster and Palmdale and communities in East Kern.

"The Antelope Valley and East Kern have been part of this whole planning effort," Barrett said.

The project, which will be constructed and run by county Waterworks District 40, will be built in four phases, with the first taking tertiary-treated water from wastewater recycling plants in Lancaster and Palmdale toward potential recycled water users.

Tertiary-treated water has been treated three times and can be used for irrigation

and agricultural purposes.

The second and third phases would create recycled water storage reservoirs and build more pipelines to recycled water users.

"We have to be able to get the recycled water where it needs to go," Barrett said.

The fourth and final phase, slated for completion in 2013 or 2014, would connect the recycled water networks in Palmdale and Lancaster, creating one system.

A 2005 estimate lists the project's price tag as \$119.2 million, with 75% of that funding coming from charges to developers using the recycled water.

That would cut the price to \$29.8 million in 2005 dollars.

Norm Hickling, an aide to 5th District

County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, said the recycled water project's continued progress is important for Antelope Valley residents and businesses.

"The financial commitment is critical, and no project can be done without an environmental impact report," Hickling said.

"It takes a large amount of resources and manpower to come up with a plan, and it's absolutely necessary if we're going to meet the water for our agricultural needs, our business needs, for the residents we have now and for the residents who will come here in the future."

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