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CalCity EDC briefed on A.V. water plan

Ensuring water supplies

BY BILL DEEVER

CALIFORNIA CITY — A plan to coordinate management of water in the East Kern/Antelope Valley region was presented to Southeast Kern business and community leaders at last week's California City Economic Development Corporation breakfast.

Claud Seal of the Rosamond Community Service District said the plan is aimed at developing a method for managing water and ensuring that funding will be available for building facilities

to deliver water in the region. Seal said the Antelope Valley is a "closed" water basin, which means that water that comes into the basin has no outlet.

"It is either used or it evaporates," Seal said. "It's like a big bathtub."

While water levels in the region were a few feet underground in the 1960s, it is now necessary to drill wells up to 300 feet deep, Seal said.

Local water supplies are supplemented by water that flows from Northern California through the California Aqueduct. That water is wholesaled to

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local water agencies by the Antelope Valley/East Kern Water Agency (AVEK), Seal explained.

Growth strains system

Burgeoning growth in the region places a strain on water supplies, and the two-year effort to develop the Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) is aimed at helping communities meet that growth, said Seal, whose district includes one of the fastest-growing communities in the region.

Seal said that while AVEK water is an important source, it can be interrupted by shortages and other problems along its 300-plus mile route.

It is also expensive, EDC president Larry Adams said, noting that connecting water meters can cost upwards of

\$8,000.

"We have to develop our own supplies," Seal said. One way of doing that is by "banking" water underground in wet years, and withdrawing it in dry years, like this one, one of the driest on record.

Seal said AVEK and a private group are proposing water banking projects west of Rosamond. (See story this issue on the Rosamond Municipal Advisory Council meeting).

Obtaining grants from state and federal agencies for water system improvements, including a system of pipes criss-crossing the region to transport water where it is needed, is another way to ensure adequate water supplies.

While agencies "never get all the money we need," approval of the plan will make it easier for agencies to obtain grant

funds, Seal said.

Although the impetus for the plan originated in Lancaster and Palmdale, Seal emphasized that "we are all involved one way or another." He said he and others in Kern County have been working to ensure that Kern County's interests are fully represented in the planning process.

Public involvement

Nicole West of the City of Lancaster said the plan is available for public review and the California City meeting was one of several scheduled around the region (including the Mojave Chamber of Commerce meeting at noon Thursday, June 28, at the Mariah Country Inn) aimed at briefing residents about the plan.

West said copies of the plan are available at www.waterplan.org.