

Even if there's a public water takeover, MPWMD needs fixing

~ By Rick Heuer

Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association

Even before their petition has qualified for the ballot, Public Water Now has posted yard signs promising lower rates and affordable water if we vote to take-over Cal Am. The trouble with this promise is that it's not being made by the group that will control rates if a California American Water take-over is successful, the Water Management District.

The Water Management District's track record is spending millions of dollars yet producing no new water and there is less water available today than when they were created. The public voted overwhelmingly to disband the District, since then they continue to create new ways to get more and more of our money.

The Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association has been fighting to protect the rights of taxpayers on the Monterey Peninsula for over 30 years. The actions of the Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association have directly led to the return of millions of dollars to county taxpayers. Today, we are in a similar battle with the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District. Despite receiving thousands of protests from residents and a subsequent referendum certified by the County Elections' Department, the Board of the Water Management District chose to ignore the public and the law placed the Ordinance 152 "tax" on our property tax bills. The Taxpayers Association sued and we are awaiting the ruling of the Court of Appeals.

The District said they went ahead with the Ordinance 152 fee as a replacement to a fee that had been on our water bills which the California Public Utilities Commission ruled illegal. The problem with that argument is they subsequently used your tax dollars to sue the CPUC, taking the case to the Supreme Court. Taxpayers are now paying the replacement fee and the original fee.

Something else Public Water Now never mentions is the fact that the tiered water rates we pay today under Cal Am are, in fact, an invention of the Water Management District. The District was deeply involved in creating the system that charges large users ten times the amount for a unit of water a small user pays. We've all seen the effect this has when a water leak occurs. Cal Am stated before the CPUC that it would like to make the tiers less steep after a desalination plant is built – and the Water Management District objected! They told the CPUC the rates should stay as they are.

Given the track record of the Water Management District, how in good conscious can Public Water Now ask us to believe our water bills will be lower if the District is put in charge? The District is currently spending \$17 million a year and doesn't deliver a single drop of water. Their record is not one of spending less money, it's one of spending more. Already, representatives of the District have said that if the Public Water Now initiative passes, they have the ability to