

The Estancia Basin Residents should be skeptical of WaterTexas and their proposal to build a desalinization plant in the south end of the valley. The proposal intends to not only desalinate brackish water to produce usable "fresh" water, but to transport it north through a pipeline they would build, making wholesale water available to Estancia, Moriarty, Edgewood, and other East Mountain areas. They propose that the plant and pipeline, to be known as Great Basin Water, could be complete by 2011.

But Moriarty, with its water study almost complete, has water for the next 10-15 years. WaterTexas/Great Basin Water seeks legal exclusivity agreements, breakable only by \$100,000 penalties, requiring Moriarty and other participating municipalities to purchase a certain quantity of water at prices that can only be higher than the current fresh water prices. If Moriarty purchases wholesale water at double or more than current retail prices, to stay financially afloat the town will find it necessary to sell excess water somewhere. It would be painfully ironic if the only market available turned out to be large urban developments to the north, outside the valley aquifers.

The projected amount of water needed by WaterTexas for a regional water system do not match what it currently has available. They are going to need more water. Fresh water is readily available and much cheaper to use. The brackish/treated water and fresh water are combined to achieve required quality and quantity with the result that all wholesale water increases in cost across the board. Furthermore, those listening to the presentations to date are noticing wide fluctuations in costs and quantities of actual production of water. Are these people so conceptual that they do not really know what they are doing? Is it wise for our communities to make legal commitments limiting their options to develop their own water systems with a group that does not seem to really know just what they are all about? Could this be a con to shackle the towns while other interests build a pipeline to market water to the highest bidder?

Who in the end could own Great Basin Water? This is a private, for profit, proposal. No shame there, but a business run for profit must make a profit. WaterTexas will approach this project with its own private investors, whose names are held discreetly unrevealed. WaterTexas has been up front that it does not intend to operate or indefinitely own a water company and suggests the municipalities and other stakeholders may wish to own the company themselves. But can this occur? Who in the end, through the might of more money in their hands, could become the owner of this pipeline and thus controller of the bulk of the Estancia Basin Water?

I think it would be a good thing to have a pipeline for water connecting the communities. However this pipeline would best be owned by a public governmental organization. As far as eventually shipping our water out of the basin, I think WaterTexas could be a greater threat than Sierra Water Company's proposed water sale and pipeline to Santa Fe of two years ago. We should be leery of this project.

EBRA is hosting a public meeting for Water Texas to present its project. I urge all residents to take time to be there.

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