



Residents for Responsible Desalination

"Organized for coastal protection advocacy and education about seawater desalination."

RESIDENTS FOR RESPONSIBLE DESALINATION **PRESS RELEASE**

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Huntington Beach: Poseidon Desalination Loses Permit Decision

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Today the California Coastal Commission overrode a permit issued by the City of Huntington Beach for the proposed Poseidon Resources desalination facility and will be scheduling a hearing to review and likely amend the permit. The Commission found that appeals of the City's issuance of a Coastal Development Permit raised substantial issues about whether the City enforced their own regulations on development in the coastal zone.

Numerous issues were raised in the appeals, from whether or not the seawater intake and discharge plan was allowable to questions about whether the noise from operating the facility will impact wildlife in the surrounding wetlands.

According to Merle Moshiri, president of a local residential group, Residents for Responsible Desalination, "These are issues we raised before our City Council that they refused to resolve. We're not strictly opposed to ocean desalination, but projects have to at least comply with our local laws."

Other appellants added similar concerns. Garry Brown of the Orange County Coastkeeper added, "We're not convinced that ocean desalination is necessary in Orange County when cheaper and more environmentally viable alternatives are available. Water agencies can improve their conservation programs, expand the Groundwater Replenishment System and capture more rainwater in treatment wetlands – all of these benefit the environment, provide local and reliable water supplies, and save ratepayers money."

The Coastal Act allows local governments to draft a "Local Coastal Plan" that is certified by the Coastal Commission so that land use planning can be controlled by local government while maintaining consistent minimum protections statewide. The Coastal Commission retains limited authority to accept appeals and overturn these local decisions. And they most often only use that review authority when it is clear the City has failed to enforce their local regulations, and the case is serious enough for the Commission to step in. "When cities are granted certification of their Local Coastal Program, they take on a duty to enforce those rules," according to Joe Geever, Policy Coordinator for Surfrider Foundation. "Unfortunately, the Huntington Beach City Council chose to permit this desalination project when it clearly violated their own rules. If they want to maintain local authority, they have to enforce the rules."

The final decision will now be decided by the Coastal Commission at a hearing to review the project proposal in its entirety – not just the limited issues raised in the appeals. "The City Council didn't do Poseidon any favors by approving this flawed permit – it just delays the final outcome," says Geever.

The Coastal Commission did not set a date for reviewing the permit and issuing a final decision.