



Residents for Responsible Desalination

“Organized for coastal protection advocacy and education about seawater desalination.”

October 2021

Dear Friends of the Coast:

R4RD continues its opposition to the **Poseidon Water/Brookfield** seawater desalination project in HB by preparing for the project’s hearing with the California Coastal Commission (CCC). Though the relevant CCC hearing scheduled for November has been postponed, no future date has been, as yet, set. R4RD must now plan for a December 2021 hearing date, although February 2022 will be more likely. This is due to Poseidon’s unprecedented demands and unprincipled foot-dragging.

Message from R4RD’s President:

A cynical political premise had its effective start in the early ‘80s: **“For every complex problem there is a simple solution that’s dead wrong, but a majority of the public can be swayed to go for anyway.”** Nevertheless, it’s true that a certain portion of the public has always gone for the *simple-though-wrong* solution, but the ‘80s saw a turning point wherein that ‘*certain portion*’ was occasionally a voting majority. Special interest groups or individuals have poured large sums of money into the efforts to sway voters to that *simple-though-wrong* solution.

The ‘80s also saw the rise of the 24-hour cable news channel. To fill the 24 hours, we saw the rise of the telegenic pundit along with the concept of news programming as entertainment. The better entertainment derived from pundits at each of the far ends of the topical spectrum arguing. Thus, was born “sound bite” and “sub-headline” news punditry often touting *simple-though-wrong* solutions—the more simplistic but clever sound bite often winning the so-called “debate”. However, there was no accountability or downside risk for the pundit espousing a position later to be found as dead wrong. This led to a rationalizing of the *simple-though-wrong* solutions to complex issues, and an overall contribution to a dumbing down of the news-seeking audience. This is compounded by the punditry often extolling the benefits of a *simple-though-wrong* solution while downplaying the worth or cost of a complex or real solution.

Huntington Beach has its very own poster-child of the *simple-though-wrong* principle: **Seawater Desalination**. Removing the salt from ocean water to produce potable drinking water can seem simple enough—it’s not. It requires complicated processes, is extremely expensive, and needs massive amounts of energy. **Poseidon Water/Brookfield** and its proponents would have you believe in the easy solution by using overly simplistic slogans, such as, “Desal is a drought-proof water supply” and “the Pacific is world’s biggest reservoir”. They’ve turned the ‘*human-right-to-water*’ on its head into the ‘*human right to desalinated seawater*’. They’ve claimed for over 20 years that desalination would be less expensive in the near future while the HB project cost estimates have risen from \$250Million to \$1.4Billion. While Poseidon/Brookfield claimed far less expensive sources of water supply were too complicated and unreliable, they insisted that the HB desal project would use straight-forward, 30+ year-old reverse osmosis technology. Forgetting, however, desal technology was supposedly becoming better and less costly.

Orange County water ratepayers should realize that removing the salts and other dissolved solids and minerals from seawater is not a simple process—far from it. That process is complex, inefficient, very costly, and energy intensive. Plus, the desalinated product water will contain excess boron, dissolved solids, and residual salts making the product water unsuitable for injection into the groundwater basin according to the *Irvine Ranch Water District*. Then, the desalination process also must dispose of huge amounts of brine, which adds significantly to the complexity to make it less toxic to marine life.

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There are complicated reasons the *National Academy of Sciences* states seawater desalination should be thought of as a potable water source of *last resort*. Those who think otherwise are indeed dead wrong.

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R4RD will appreciate a donation of any amount, and, if you're a member, paying any dues outstanding. If you're not an R4RD member, please consider becoming one. All payments can be made via mail or electronically via [www.r4rd.org](http://www.r4rd.org) by selecting the "Donate" button. Thank you and stay safe and well.

~~Dave Hamilton, *pres.*

~~*Residents for Responsible Desalination*