



Press Release

April 9, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Gabriel Solmer (Coastkeeper), 619-933-1134 (cell); 619-758-7743 ext. 109
Joe Geever (Surfrider), (949) 636-8426 (cell); (310) 410-2890

Environmental Groups Caution Agency on Carlsbad Desalination Vote

Water Board Approves Plan on Marine Impacts with Significant Conditions

(SAN DIEGO) Poseidon Resources' proposed Carlsbad Desalination Plant (CDP) faces more questions than answers as the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board on Wednesday approved the *Technical Report for Revised Flow, Entrainment, and Impingement Minimization Plan* ('Plan'), with substantial conditions and the caveat that the Plan does not yet meet Board requirements. The *Plan*, which examines ways to reduce impacts of the facility on marine life, was required by the Regional Board when it first adopted waste discharge requirements (WDR) for the proposed plant August 2006.

Several environmental groups and more than 20 individuals, led by San Diego Coastkeeper and The Surfrider Foundation, argued that it would be premature for the Board to issue a decision on the proposed *Plan* as the document is incomplete, was not made available or properly noticed with sufficient time for adequate review and analysis, and potentially undermines an inter-agency effort being proposed by the California Coastal Commission to address the marine and energy impacts of the proposed facility. The Coastal Commission and California State Lands Commission each urged the Regional Board to postpone a decision until the inter-agency process was complete.

"We appreciate the Board's decision to impose important conditions on the *Minimization Plan* today and require a more detailed submission in six months," noted Coastkeeper's Legal Director Gabriel Solmer. "However, we do not think the agency should have approved the document at all with all the questions raised at today's hearing. We thought the Board jumped the gun when approving the waste discharge requirements in 2006 when the plant was not even close to being built, and they continue to fast-track this project while significant questions still exist."

In approving the *Plan* with substantial conditions, the Regional Board noted the need for more information on potential environmental impacts of the proposed facility. It specifically required an amendment to the *Plan* be submitted within six months for Board approval. The amendment must identify impacts from impingement and entrainment, determine what mitigation is necessary, include adequate monitoring data, and address 17 separate Regional Board concerns.

The Poseidon project has drawn broad criticism from the environmental community and fishing organizations for its plans to use an outdated and destructive technology to intake more than 300 million gallons a day of water from the sensitive Agua Hedionda lagoon. Poseidon plans to use the existing intake infrastructure from the Encina Power Station, which plans to halt its use of ocean water to cool the power plant, to withdraw lagoon water in order to create up to 50 million gallons of drinking water daily. Board members made clear that their acceptance of the *Plan* did not extend to Poseidon's proposal to operate the intake independently.

Stated Joe Geever of The Surfrider Foundation, "It would be a travesty to see Encina take steps to reduce impacts in this impaired water body only to have Poseidon step in and continue this unnecessary environmental degradation. There are ways to get seawater into the desalination facility that avoid these marine impacts, including subsurface intakes."

Today's action marks the third time an agency has questioned the sufficiency of information being provided by Poseidon Resources on the potential impacts of this facility. The 5-2 decision follows the Coastal Commission's conditional approval in November, which is being challenged in court by The Surfrider Foundation, and the State Lands Commission's October decision to postpone a vote until Poseidon provided them concrete information on carbon neutrality or marine life mortality.

Environmental leaders have also decried the CDP's potential impact on climate change. Ocean desalination demands far more energy than other water supply alternative, including conservation, water recycling and even increased water storage or transfers.

"It is disappointing that this project keeps moving forward while agencies acknowledge an insufficiency of information of how this plant will impact our ocean and climate," said Bruce Reznik, Coastkeeper's Executive Director. "The region can meet most of its growing water demand by increasing conservation, recycling more wastewater, and restoring groundwater through improved watershed management. These alternatives will reduce our energy consumption, are far more cost-effective than desalination, and will also reduce pollution of our coastal waters."

Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region's bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. The group balances community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches for all people.