



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Coastkeeper Responds to Mayoral Staff's 'Foul Email'

Group Cites Factual and Policy Errors about Water Reuse in Sainz Diatribe

(San Diego) San Diego Coastkeeper responded to the controversial email from Fred Sainz, Communications Director for Mayor Jerry Sanders, to Bob Kittle, editorial page editor of the San Diego Union-Tribune, citing factual inconsistencies as well as poor policy judgments in statements about wastewater treatment and reuse.

"Based on his colorful use of language, Mr. Sainz should stick to communications, and away from public policy," noted Coastkeeper's Executive Director Bruce Reznik. "It is unfortunate, however, that Mayor Sanders and the Union-Tribune seem to be taking their policy cues from PR advisors."

The email, titled, "*Managed Comp Fact Sheet .doc ; Audit Consultant pdf, Toilet to Tap Memo City Attorney .pdf*", iterates the Mayor's position on 'Toilet to Tap', a term that in its simplicity mischaracterizes a proposed effort to reuse treated wastewater to augment the San Vicente Reservoir, a drinking water source for San Diego. Coastkeeper first challenges Mr. Sainz comment that, "toilet to tap makes no sense on the economics of it alone. It will cost three times the amount per gallon than what we pay now and will add only slightly to our water supply."

In fact, the City of San Diego's own 2005/2006 Water Reuse Study, which examined six options for enhancing local water supplies through water recycling and reuse, concluded that a mixed potable and non-potable strategy is the only way to achieve 100% reuse at the North City Water Reclamation Plant at an estimated monthly water bill average increase of \$1.63 per household. A strictly non-potable strategy, which the Mayor has supported, would only achieve 73% of plant capacity at a significantly higher cost of \$2.34 per customer.

The Study concluded that the NC-3 alternative, which includes using up to 16 million gallons per day (MGD) to augment the San Vicente reservoir, "...appears to be the appropriate choice if the driving decision factors are to *maximize recycled water use* and have the *lowest ultimate unit cost*"¹ (*emphasis added*).

According to Reznik, "developing a municipally owned, drought-proof supply of water is the best way to provide San Diegans with a safe and affordable source of water in the long-term."

It is precisely because of the lower cost that groups like the San Diego County Taxpayers Association, San Diego Chamber of Commerce and BIOCOMM (hardly typical allies of the environmental community) have supported indirect potable reuse.

"It is interesting that Mr. Sainz and Mayor Sanders talk about the cost of indirect potable reuse, when they support two alternatives that are considered far more costly than IPR: non-potable water reuse and desalination." According to a Coastkeeper analysis, water transfers (where most of San Diego's water comes from) cost between \$400-\$800 per acre/foot. Potable reuse costs \$800-\$900 per acre/foot, while desalination will run \$1,100-\$1,500 per acre/foot.

One point where Coastkeeper partially agreed with Mr. Sainz in his email correspondence was his cost assessments for IPR and upgrading Point Loma to secondary treatment, which he estimated at \$250 million and \$1.4 billion, respectively. While Coastkeeper's estimates differ somewhat - \$200-\$280M for IPR and \$400M-\$1B for secondary treatment (depending on the progress of emerging technologies) - these totals are far closer than those included in Mayor Sanders September 13, 2007 Memorandum to the City Council and City Attorney, which stated that, "the capital costs on IPR range from \$300 million to at least \$4.5 billion for the City Attorney's Point Loma IPR option."

According to Coast Law Group Partner Marco Gonzalez, "While we have never been certain where the \$4.5B estimate came from as it was never substantiated, we think the Mayor presented a misleading claim of what it would take to convert all of Point Loma to a potable reuse facility, a proposal for which neither the City Council nor environmental groups have ever advocated."

Coastkeeper also took umbrage with Sainz' claim that implementing IPR would have nothing to do with whether an exemption for sewage treatment standards would be approved by the U.S. EPA Environmental Protection Agency. According to Gonzalez, "members of the environmental community have consistently said they would be more likely to support a waiver if less waste was being discharged to the ocean due to water reuse, and we would advocate that EPA take that into consideration as well."

¹ City of San Diego Water Reuse Study (March 2006), page 7-10

Representatives from Coastkeeper also expressed concern over the connection between the Mayor Sander's office and the Union-Tribune, and the paper's reluctance to print countervailing editorials and letters supplied by Coastkeeper (*see attached*).

"It has always seemed to us that the U-T has been carrying the water for the Mayor's office," added Reznik, "and this seems to prove the point. This a case where public relations has trumped public policy, with Mayor Sanders, Fred Sainz and Bob Kittle waging an unnecessary battle against a broad-based coalition that includes environmental and industry groups, local cities and water districts, and elected officials across the political spectrum ranging from Jim Madaffer and Scott Peters to Donna Frye and Mike Aguirre."

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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 organization balances community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.