

## El Dorado district, Folsom approve joint water project

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Published Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

The El Dorado Irrigation District and the city of Folsom have approved a project to enable each to come to the other's aid in a water emergency.

The two also agreed to evaluate other projects of mutual interest, such as a water intake pumping station at Folsom Lake and a seasonal storage reservoir for recycled water.

In seeking project funding, "if we do these things as a region, we have more political clout with state and federal entities," said Folsom utilities director Ken Payne.

Folsom will shoulder the design and construction costs for an intertie connecting the two water systems near the Folsom-El Dorado Hills border. Water then could be transferred between the agencies in the case of unforeseen events such as the February 2009 collapse of the pipeline that supplied the city with water from Folsom Lake.

Payne said the city has similar intertie agreements with the San Juan Water District to the north and the Golden State Water Co. to the west. The new intertie was scheduled for construction this summer, he said, but it is on hold pending approval of the next fiscal year's budget.

Although it would be easier to send water downhill to Folsom, El Dorado Irrigation District officials said a portable pump could be used to deliver water from Folsom to El Dorado Hills.

They stressed that water transfers would be authorized only for short-term emergencies and not as ongoing supplies or for new development. Also, neither agency would be committed to aid the other if either declared a drought.

"I think this makes all the sense in the world. ... I think it's a no-brainer for us," board member Harry Norris said before irrigation district directors approved the agreement last month.

But he and other board members said the district stands to realize greater benefit from other projects it might pursue with the city.

Included within the district's boundaries are about 100 acres in unincorporated Sacramento County that are part of 3,600 acres south of Highway 50 that Folsom seeks to annex. Payne said the city does not propose to alter the district's boundaries, and Folsom has an agreement with Natomas Central Mutual Water Co. to purchase 8,000 acre-feet of water annually to serve the bulk of the area proposed for annexation.

But the city plans to require new homes and businesses south of the freeway to be plumbed so recycled water could be used for landscape irrigation. Payne said Folsom and the irrigation district might be able to cooperate on a seasonal storage reservoir for recycled water.

Due to a shortage of storage facilities for recycled water, the irrigation district uses potable water

to supplement recycled water supplies during part of the year.

Some El Dorado County residents, however, voiced concern that projects that foster development south of Highway 50 in Folsom would increase pressure for development across the county line.

Irrigation district officials said growth-inducing effects would be evaluated in the environmental study for any project the agencies sought to pursue.

"If it's not growth-inducing and Folsom needs assistance and it can lower the rates my ratepayers pay," Norris said, "it's something I'm going to look at."

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