

Texas Desal Project Participant

Re: Request for Information by April 16, 2010

Dear Stakeholder,

I would like to take this opportunity to again thank you for your participation in the Stakeholder's Workshop held in December on South Padre Island. The information and feedback gained during that event was very helpful to the planning and design teams in understanding some of the resource issues associated with seawater desalination.

The purpose of this letter is to request your input regarding two follow-up items relating to the Texas Desal Project, namely: a) a planning aid memorandum, and b) potential research topics.

Planning Aid Memorandum

As we discussed during the workshop, the Texas Desal Project is requesting your agency or organization provide a written planning aid memorandum to the seawater desalination project sponsors that: 1) identifies any permitting requirements and/or regulatory role, if any; 2) identifies potential resource concerns associated with the development and operation of the proposed seawater desalination facilities, and 3) recommends measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse impacts. I've included a brief project summary of each of the two proposed seawater desalination projects (Brownsville Ship Channel and South Padre Island), including which alternative components are presently under consideration. I cannot overstate the value your memorandum would provide, even if only general in nature, to the project planning and development team, so please take advantage of this opportunity to contribute.

Research Topics

Also as discussed during the workshop, part of what the Texas Desal Project will provide to the Texas Water Development Board is a list of recommended research items that are beyond the present scope but would have value state-wide. Your thoughts and recommendations to this end are welcomed. At present, two such items have been proposed.

1. Gulf of Mexico Salinity Tolerance Tests – A method to identify the salinity tolerance of key the aquatic species that would inhabit the area of a desalination plant concentrate discharge along the Texas Gulf Coast. This method would include the following four key steps: 1. Determination of the test salinity range; 2. Identification of site-specific test of key species inhabiting the discharge area; 3. Biometrics test at average discharge salinity; and 4. Salinity tolerance test at varying concentrate dilution levels. The individual species to be tested have not been determined, but your recommendations are welcomed. The results of these tests would provide a standard for evaluating potential impacts of seawater desalination concentrate discharges state-wide.
2. Log Removal Tests for Membranes – Present Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) log removal credits are based on membrane tests that are dated (approximately 15 years old). Given significant improvements in membrane technology, a new series of tests would be conducted with regard to bacteria and virus removal, enabling TCEQ to revisit present standards with recent performance results.

Given our timeline for deliverables to Texas Water Development Board, I request that your responses to these two items be received by me either hardcopy at 919 Congress Avenue, Suite 460, Austin, Texas 78701, or email at mirlbeck@nrseengineers.com by April 16, 2010.

Thank you in advance for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Irlbeck".

Michael Irlbeck
Project Manager

CC: Jorge Arroyo, Texas Water Development Board

Enclosure