



The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Water Justice for All



June 2020

Dear Members of the Orange County Democratic Party Environmental Justice subcommittee:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and individuals, we write to reiterate our opposition to the proposed Poseidon desalination plant in Huntington Beach that the Santa Ana Regional Water Board is considering. We appreciate you forming a subcommittee to review this plant and the impacts it will have on Orange County's most vulnerable communities.

Based on a [UCLA report released in April 2019](#), environmental justice communities would bear the brunt of the negative impacts of this boondoggle. Without question, this is the most expensive and energy-intensive water we can source and water rates will go up for most living in the county. Poseidon will violate the fundamental Human Right to Water as adopted by the state of California and the Regional Water Board by fundamentally affecting affordability.

While Poseidon initially stated they would not need any public money to build this plant, as of today they have applied for [\\$400 million from the Metropolitan Water District](#), [\\$585 million low-interest loan from the US EPA](#) and [\\$1.1 billion from the state as a CPCFA bond usually](#)

[reserved to build affordable housing](#). Recently, the Metropolitan Water District voted to raise water rates to go into effect next year, even as the pandemic hit to make up for their budget shortfall with water sales at lowest in 40 years last year. With the economic downturn, water consumption is expected to go down even further. [There is absolutely no need](#) for a more than billion-dollar plant that will give us water we do not need at a price we cannot afford.

Moreover, Poseidon is claiming its Huntington Beach plant will be “carbon neutral” as it “offsets” emissions from the obscene amount of dirty energy it will run on. According to [Poseidon’s Energy Minimization and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan](#), most of the credits it intends to buy are either out of the state or even out of the country - in Ecuador. Other offsets are obtained by investing in dirty energy like [biomass](#), [biogas](#) and [black liquor](#); which end up generating greenhouse gas emissions of their own and harming the communities where the infrastructure for them is built. Carbon trading is designed to benefit the polluter and the bank trading the credits, not the communities where the polluters emit or where the traders buy the credits. The scheme is best known as pay-to-poison.

Furthermore, we believe that forest carbon offsets pose grave dangers for human rights and achieving greenhouse gas emission reductions. [These offsets do not reduce emissions in California communities where massive polluting emissions occur](#). In addition, research from the University of California, Berkeley, as referenced by the MIT Technology Review, shows that domestic forest offsets currently accepted by California Air Resources Board (CARB) may overstate their emissions reductions by 80 million tons of carbon dioxide, which represents one-third of the total cuts that the state’s cap-and-trade program is supposed to achieve.

Lastly, as we start to address PFAS in groundwater throughout Orange County and the cost associated with it, we must give priority to decontaminating the current source of water and ensure a safe supply, also part of the Human Right to Water. The proposed desal plant in south county is still looking for funding as MWDOC members want to clean up PFAS in wells first.

We don’t have to choose between good union jobs and the well-being of environmental justice communities as we come out of this recession. By investing public money in PFAS decontamination and affordable housing, we can ensure good union jobs and ensure a safe and affordable supply of water for Orange County residents.

Sincerely,

Azul
SoCal 350
Oakview ComUnidad
Idle No More
Mujeres de la Tierra
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Physicians for Social Responsibility - LA
Communities for a Better Environment

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Jack Eidt
Oscar Rodriguez
Lydia Ponce
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Pachamama Alliance -LA
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