

### Finish Line in Sight

*The mission of the Nipomo Community Services District is to provide its customers with reliable, quality, and cost-effective services now and in the future.*

At the September 14, 2016, Nipomo Community Services District ("NCSD") Board Meeting, staff presented the design and construction cost estimates for the final phases of the Nipomo Supplemental Water Project ("NSWP"). The NSWP connects the City of Santa Maria with NCSD's pipelines. The completion of the NSWP will fulfill NCSD's obligation to build pipes and pumps to bring import water onto the Nipomo Mesa. Once completed, the NSWP will bolster water security and reliability for the residents and commercial enterprises of Nipomo as well as others who rely on the underlying groundwater basin for their water supply.

The NSWP and the security that comes with it, comes at a price. Some may claim the cost is too high and not all who benefit are paying their fair share. But in these years of drought and unpredictable weather patterns, the community's investment in itself is paying dividends.

In 1997, the Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation Agency filed a lawsuit against the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin water users. For nearly 20 years and millions of dollars in litigation costs, representatives from the many individuals and communities on the Nipomo Mesa named in the lawsuit sought a balance between actions and arguments. As a result, the NCSD is nearing the completion of an action that was extensively debated – a physical solution to the water problem.

The finish line is in sight. Two projects estimated at \$4 million are all that is left to fund and construct from the \$33.7 million dollar NSWP project list. The final cost of the NSWP is 10% less than the estimated cost of the project. Once the last two phases are completed the District will have the ability to bring the Court-ordered 2,500 acre feet per year ("AFY") of import water onto the Mesa. The District has a financial plan and a target date of 2022 to secure the project funding needs. Conservatively, the final two projects would take 16 to 20 months to construct. By 2025, NCSD is contractually obligated to start taking or paying for a minimum of 2,500 AFY from the City of Santa Maria – an achievable goal. However, if the groundwater basin remains at historically critical levels, NCSD may need to compress this schedule.

The residents of Nipomo have demonstrated their resolve by meeting the challenges of our current water shortage condition. Residents know this is not the last drought California will experience. Water conservation practices help sustain the water we have today. Courageous planning for future water needs is critical. The communities on the Nipomo Mesa argued constructively in the Courts and NCSD has taken action to build the NSWP – a solution that secures a reliable water supply to the Nipomo Mesa. As perfect or imperfect the NSWP is in resolving our water woes – sentiments ranging from folly to fortuitous – I believe a mild sense of relief will begin to overtake the community as it reflects on its achievement and utilizes the dividends that flow from the NSWP. Great job Nipomo!

Until next time...

Mario Iglesias, General Manager, [info@ncsd.ca.gov](mailto:info@ncsd.ca.gov) Follow us on  or  NipomoCSD