

Government Works Best with Trust

Water providers on the Central Coast should find ways to work together for the interests of their constituents. Most communities on the Central Coast have government agencies overseeing their water supplies. In this water-challenged time, people want the reassurance, security, and knowledge that the essential water services they depend on will be there when they need it. And people want to have confidence that they are getting these services at a fair price. These challenges are greater than a single water provider can overcome and that is why governing bodies charged with providing water must work together.

Shared challenges are numerous and opportunities to meet these challenges are endless when government leaders develop trust between one another and their constituency. Without trust, things don't get done. Trust is built by individuals who demonstrate how to behave when they have the advantage. In the Santa Maria Valley there is clear evidence that government can work in this manner. Examine the progress made between the City of Santa Maria and the water providers on the Nipomo Mesa and the evidence is clear government does work when trust is built.

The City of Santa Maria has a history of insightful government leadership when it comes to securing their community's water needs. They recognized the value of water early on and committed far more than any other single community in the surrounding area to developing a long-range solution. With the trust of the community, government leadership had the ability to act. A healthy community needs a reliable water source and City leaders had the courage to commit financially to a host of water projects that secures a reliable water supply for their residents. Poised to grow a strong economy, City leaders could have been content in their position. Instead, they choose to demonstrate how government should use their advantage.

The leadership of Santa Maria recognized that by extending their community to include others they increase the strength and reliability of their own assets. They have created value for their neighbors at no expense to their constituency and demonstrated to other government entities how cooperative behavior can lead to greater success. The City of Santa Maria has committed to selling water to the Nipomo Community Services District for the foreseeable future. In return the City has increased their customer base and spread the costs of running the city's water utility over a broader base and that keeps the price of water down.

Thankfully, good government functions like good businesses function - they both look for opportunities to benefit the communities they serve. Leaders of both demonstrate courage and lead by example. It is easy to discount the efforts of good governance when we see the dysfunctional forces of bad governance. But for a moment, consider the good that has come from two government agencies working together to do the right thing. The City of Santa Maria and the communities on the Nipomo Mesa are joined together by a contract, a pipeline, and a common goal of providing safe, healthy water to their residents. This success story demonstrates how trust between those that serve *in* government can improve the lives of those served *by* government.

Until next time...

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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.