

We urgently need new board members.

After contributing their time for many years, some current board members are leaving. The continuing success of SFBWA depends on people like you, who care about water supplies in our area, serving on the board. Please contact Dave Gold at dave@sfbwa.org



SFBWA tried to reach agreement with the City before the Northwest Well application was submitted. Now we will need funds to pursue the matter... up to \$80,000. Please help us with a donation for attorney and hydrologist fees.



Watching out for all our water...

Dear Well Owner, Acequia Member, and Interested Citizen

SFBWA Summary

SFBWA works to protect the aquifer and existing water users. Currently we are proactively engaged in:

- Santa Fe City Northwest Well and other water rights – The City is about to apply for permanent use of a lot of groundwater rights. They also have a lot of unused rights that could cause problems.
- Eldorado Water District – We are working with the State Engineer and

EAWSO on their new well 18, and to assure proper monitoring in the Galisteo Basin.

- Buckman Monitoring Agreement – We are making sure the City lives up to its obligations under the settlement.
- Santa Fe County Sustainable Land Development Code – The County is updating its code to be sustainable. We want to make sure that includes sustainable water usage.

Northwest Well

The City is ready to release a new application to the State Engineer for the Northwest Well that allows pumping of 900 acre feet per year. The current permit expires in three months. The City was only allowed to use this well while building the Buckman Direct Diversion.

operational for any reason (such as low river water, sediment build up, mechanical failure) then it is appropriate to use groundwater while the emergency lasts.

The BDD is now operational and bringing 5,000 afy of renewable Rio Grande water into the City water system. The City claims its policy is to rely primarily on the BDD, rest the municipal wells, and allow the aquifer to recover. The new application is inconsistent with this policy.

SFBWA met with the City Council, the Public Utilities Committee, the Finance Committee and the Water Department to advocate for "emergency use only" for the NW well. Two City Councilors (Patti Bushee and Miguel Chavez) supported our position, but the majority voted in favor of a NW well application with unrestricted use. The City Finance Committee approved \$80,000 to fight the expected protests.

What does the City plan to do with another 900 afy of groundwater? With the BDD, current water supplies are more than adequate for City needs. Does the City plan to:

- support more City growth by mining the aquifer?
- raise money by selling water to developers in the County?
- allow more reservoir water to run down the SF River?

SFBWA believes that the only justification for a new NW well application is to back up the BDD. If the BDD is not fully

SFBWA will indeed protest the new NW well application on three grounds:

- 1) It is not in the public interest for the City to use groundwater from the NW well to support new growth either in the City or the County.
- 2) Water conservation requires that groundwater only be used when renewable supplies (the BDD and reservoirs) are inadequate.
- 3) There will be serious impact to domestic wells that are in the vicinity of the NW well.

City Water Rights

The City has thousands of acre-feet of groundwater rights that it is not using in the near term and may not need in the long term. NM law is based on the idea of "use it, or lose it". To show "beneficial use" they must pump the full amount for a year. Then they can use it later.

What will the City do with these "surplus" groundwater rights? They claim they want to keep them in reserve, but so far they have talked a lot about sustainability, but not always "walked the talk". There are a number of possible scenarios and each one could result in permanent damage to the aquifer, such as:

- Selling water rights to developers
- Selling wet water to non-city customers
- Sponsoring a lot of growth, without regard to sustainability

The bottom line is these issues are complex with critical implications for the City water supply, finances, and impact on the aquifer. They also have serious implications for growth and water use in the County. The City needs to address these questions in their entirety, and involve City and County residents in their resolution.

County Wells

After five years of effort by SFBWA, the County has withdrawn its applications for the County Wells. For the present, the County has decided to purchase water from the City, rather than use water from new County wells. Further, if the County decides to submit new applications for County wells in the future, the Board of County Commissioners has passed a resolution to adopt the recommendations of the County Water Focus Group.

SFBWA was very active on the Water Focus Group. The group's recommendations include safeguards for minimizing the impact of County wells on other water users:

- a process for locating County wells away from springs and domestic wells as much as possible,
- limits on annual pumping in accordance with hydrological drawdown studies,
- guidelines for monitoring in areas where other water users might be impacted,

- commitments for mitigation in case serious impacts actually occur,
- a process for public outreach before applications are submitted to the OSE.

The water purchased from the City will only be used for backup when the County is unable to obtain supplies from the Buckman Direct Diversion. Under this situation, the City will likely be supplying groundwater from its own wells to the County. However, the amount is relatively small over short periods of time. With the County relying primarily on its BDD supply, much less groundwater will be consumed overall.

The County Wells application began with 200 protests. SFBWA is very pleased to have achieved this final resolution of these protests. All the support and donations from our members has paid off.



SFBWA Board of Directors:

David Gold, President

John Miles Smith, Vice President

Carl Dickens, Secretary

Spencer Ballard, Treasurer

Ann Murray, Member

Volunteers Needed!

Board Members
Projects Teams

Email Dave Gold:
dave@sfbwa.org

Buckman Monitoring Agreement

SFBWA continues to pay attention to the execution of the agreement with the City to monitor drawdown caused by the Buckman Wells. This agreement provides protection to nearby domestic well owners. The City recently proposed a number of changes to the agreement that would reduce its time and effort. The City informed SFBWA of the proposed changes, but refused to meet with us to negotiate a resolution.

The Office of the State Engineer agreed that, as a party to the agreement reached in District Court, SFBWA must be involved in any changes.

Accordingly we met with the OSE and reviewed the proposed changes. The OSE generally supported our position. The net result was no changes were approved that reduced the long-term protection of other water users.

In general, the City is living up to the terms of the agreement. If the City relies primarily on the Buckman Direct Diversion for its water supply, the use of the Buckman Wells will be reduced. The City is currently projecting no impairment to nearby wells from City pumping in the next 40 years.

Eldorado Wells and Monitoring Program

The Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District (EAWSD) submitted its first annual report for the monitoring program that protects San Marcos, Cerrillos and Galisteo. SFBWA hired a hydrologist to analyze the monitoring report. The main findings were that EAWSD has made substantial progress in implementing the monitoring program. However, some readings are not being taken frequently enough, and some others, taken during active pumping, are invalid.

In a subsequent meeting with SFBWA, EAWSD admitted that it is having problems with measuring certain wells, and that some of the problems may be insurmountable. SFBWA wants these problems to be resolved quickly, or new monitor wells substituted, so that a complete baseline can be established. Accordingly we have alerted the OSE to

the situation and asked for their assistance.

EAWSD has submitted an application for a new well (Well 18). The proposed location of Well 18 is close to the San Marcos creek. If this well is approved, it will bring the overall pumping center for the EAWSD well field closer to the creek. As a result, downstream water users in San Marcos and Cerrillos may see increased impact to their water supplies.

SFBWA is assisting in the protest of a nearby well owner. Given the costs of going through an OSE hearing, we are exploring options for mediating the dispute directly with EAWSD.

Our Request to You

Each of the efforts described in this newsletter is expensive. To work with the OSE, City, and County we hire the services of highly specialized attorneys and hydrologists. We have assembled an excellent team, which includes our board members who donate their time. But we need money to pay our experts and other organizational expenses. While we keep costs as low as possible, we have to meet considerable expenses to carry on our work.

Please send your donation to:
 SFBWA, P.O. Box 6132, Santa Fe, NM 87502.
 You can also use Paypal at <http://www.sfbwa.org/html/donate.html>.
 If you wish to volunteer or have questions, please call 505-471-3974.
Note: SFBWA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization. Donations are not tax deductible.