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MCWD Appeals Ormat's Geothermal Expansion in Fight to Protect Water Supplies

Negotiation Meetings with Ormat Fail to Produce Meaningful Progress; Ormat Backs Out of Commitments to Safeguard Regional Water Supplies

Mammoth Lakes, CA – As state lawmakers enter the final week of the legislative session and negotiate proposed legislation that would mandate California obtain 50 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030, the Mammoth Community Water District (MCWD) filed a notice of appeal seeking review of the Mono County Superior Court's decision to deny MCWD's challenge to the environmental review of Ormat Technologies' (Ormat) Casa Diablo IV Geothermal Development Project (Project). The Project will double geothermal pumping by Ormat near the Town of Mammoth Lakes. MCWD previously has called the Project's environmental document grossly inadequate and has pursued inclusion of reasonable monitoring and mitigation measures to protect the region's groundwater resources as part of the Project.

"Although renewable energy expansion is an important statewide goal, so is the preservation of sustainable water supplies," said MCWD Board President Tom Smith. "MCWD is committed to protecting taxpayer dollars and the region's water needs. We will fight to ensure that Ormat implements appropriate measures to mitigate potential impacts on our groundwater supplies."

The Mammoth Lakes community has been almost entirely dependent on groundwater supplies since last year. Regional water supplies remain at critical levels due to the historic drought and strict state mandates on water conservation. Establishment of an adequate monitoring and mitigation plan is crucial.

MCWD filed a lawsuit against Ormat and the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District in August 2014, challenging the adequacy of their environmental review for the Project. On June 26, 2015, MCWD's challenge was denied by the Mono County Superior Court. The MCWD Board of Directors has decided to appeal that decision.

"We do not take the investment to pursue litigation lightly," added Smith. "But Ormat's current plans clearly contradict the long-term sustainability of our community. MCWD stands with technical experts, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), local community groups and elected officials to see that our concerns are fairly and adequately addressed."

After months of discussions, negotiations with Ormat have failed to produce meaningful progress, as Ormat unexpectedly reneged on key commitments to install deep monitoring wells and improve its monitoring and mitigation plan. In a letter to the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) last

week, MCWD called the development “troubling,” outlined fundamental areas of disagreement and called upon the BLM to assign an independent mediator.

“There is a right way and a wrong way to building geothermal projects in California,” said Smith. “There is clearly too much at stake and the possible consequences too severe for MCWD to simply walk away. We’re going to continue to push Ormat to adopt measures recommended by USGS that will protect our water supply. Anything less is an injustice to our residents and the environment – and the geothermal industry itself will suffer from a lack of community trust as it seeks to add more projects in California.”

As the state concurrently seeks to expand geothermal projects in its renewable energy portfolio, a careful examination of how geothermal projects operate is required to ensure groundwater resources are not negatively impacted. MCWD remains committed to securing a meaningful resolution to this issue, but will be vigilant in ensuring appropriate measures are put in place to protect the quality and quantity of regional groundwater supplies.

A copy of the complete letter to the BLM, can be viewed [here](#).

For more information, please visit MCWD’s website at: <http://www.mcwd.dst.ca.us>.

About Mammoth Community Water District

MCWD provides water and wastewater utility service to the Town of Mammoth Lakes and surrounding areas. MCWD strives to provide reliable, affordable utility service to our customers and to conduct our operations in a manner reflecting our stewardship role. We encourage our customers to practice responsible use of our limited water resources, and to take advantage of the information and services available to support this goal.

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