



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD
Public Affairs

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Brown, Cunningham, Cassidy, Ernst and Farmer
FROM: Jeannine Parisi, Public Affairs
DATE: January 8, 2010
RE: Update on Closure of Johnson Creek Irrigation Withdrawal System

Issue Statement: This memo provides a brief update regarding the planned closure of the Johnson Creek irrigation withdrawal system along the Leaburg Canal. EWEB is taking steps to assist impacted property owners with new irrigation-withdrawal systems that ensure the safety of the canal prior to the 2010 irrigation season.

Background: Per EWEB's operating license, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), requires regular safety inspections of the canal embankments. Based on recent inspections and a review of the original construction drawings, it was determined that the Johnson Creek irrigation vault poses a potential safety risk. It was subsequently identified as a high priority for decommissioning due to its configuration and operation by users. A July 13, 2009, memorandum to the Board described the safety concerns and closure plans in more detail.

Letters announcing the impending closure were sent to all affected water right holders in July 2009 (approximately ten property owners). Several impacted residents voiced concerns about the closure at the August 4 Board meeting. In response, EWEB invited property owners to a workshop where staff shared more background on safety risks and supplied technical information on options for installing new water-withdrawal systems that meet EWEB's requirements. This meeting was held at the fire department training center in Leaburg on October 13th. The workshop was an opportunity for staff and residents to problem-solve solutions in a productive and collaborative manner, and staff received positive feedback from participants following the meeting.

Discussion: Several options for continued withdrawal of water from the canal, with basic engineering schematics, were presented at the workshop: 1) siphons, 2) gravity-fed systems, 3) pumps, and 4) wells. Most attendees favored new gravity-fed systems, due to lower equipment costs and simplicity of installation/operation. EWEB agreed to review historic canal levels to provide more assurance that the gravity-fed solution would provide water during low flows (not including times when the canal is dropped for maintenance). Staff also agreed to reconsider language in the water use agreements that caused some concern, and to confirm which portion of the project would be EWEB's responsibility. Property owners were requested to submit plans for new systems (most of which would be shared) to EWEB in early December.

In continuing to research the gravity-fed solution, engineering staff determined that the most effective solution was to reconfigure the existing vault and provide properly-sized pipes to each property from that location. Property owners would be responsible for supplying the equipment necessary to connect to the withdrawal system at their property line. While this option required more staff involvement in design and installation, it would remove privately-owned irrigation equipment from the canal. Staff agreed to pursue this option, but needed to postpone design given other priority engineering projects.

On December 4th, EWEB sent another letter to impacted residents alerting them to the temporary delay and the new approach to the gravity-fed solution. The letter committed EWEB to complete decommissioning and retrofitting the vault for the new system by May 1st. Residents would still be able to connect new conveyance systems on their property prior to the 2010 irrigation system. EWEB has not received any concerns regarding the new schedule. Our intent is to have new water withdrawal agreements sent out to property owners by mid-February, and once the agreements are signed, will begin the decommissioning work.

Recommendation: None; this is an information item only.