

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12th, 2005

Contact Bill Gay (337-1700)

The City of El Centro will soon commence work on a complete rehabilitation and modernization of the city's water treatment plant.

Meanwhile, interim measures are underway to insure an adequate water supply while the plant expansion is underway.

When work is completed by the summer of 2008, the city will have a new 20 million gallon per day plant on line that will meet the city's growth needs.

"While it will be tight, we project that over the next three years, our existing plant will be able to serve our current population as well as new home and commercial construction currently in the pipeline," said City Manager Ruben Duran.

However, to avoid placing restrictions on future residential and commercial development, design of the new plant must proceed immediately, followed by construction. In early August, after the city council approved new user rates and capacity fees, Nolte Engineering was told to proceed with the design of the new plant.

The interim measures will be necessary to meet the rising water demand due to new construction until the proposed new plant comes on line in July 2008," said Terry Hagen, director of Public Works.

That work includes immediate \$350,000 in pump and filter repairs to increase capacity of the existing plant by 11 percent—from 13.5 million gallons per day to 15 million gallons per day.

"Last month, we had days where water consumption reached 12.5 million gallons per day, or 93 percent of capacity," Hagen said. "Recently we have had pressure drops in the water supply system due to electrical problems within the plant," he added.

These repairs will take approximately six weeks and cannot start until October when the City's demand for treated water is low enough for one filter to be taken off line at a time.

"Obviously, it is during the heat of summer when our plant is most taxed," Duran said. "Therefore, we have the 2006 and 2007 summers to deal with before our new plant is on line and we have a comfortable margin of safety."

The projected water demand to get through the summer of 2007 is estimated to be approximately 14.7 MGD. This is essentially equal to the available capacity (after the proposed repairs /modifications to the old plant are completed), leaving nothing for emergencies of higher demand.

"Based on the recent building rate, this interim fix will likely allow the new development within the City to continue without requiring a moratorium on future building," Duran said.

"If by the summer of 2007 the treatment capacity is not sufficient to meet the demands of El Centro residents, leasing or renting a portable water plant may be required. This is definitely a last resort and, hopefully, will not be necessary," he added.

“The rapid increase in growth in the Valley has accelerated and changed many of our original plans to modify and up-grade aspects of the water treatment plant,” Duran said.

The existing Water Treatment Plant was constructed in 1956.

The Department of Health Services recommends that cities begin design for expansion or construction of new water treatment facilities when current facilities reach 80 percent capacity.

When the El Centro’s plant approached 80 percent capacity, plans for the construction of three new filters were included in the Capital Improvement Plan to start design in 2003 and construction in 2004.

“Before completion of these plans,” Hagen said, “the Specific Plan proposals came in for the 2,708-home Lerno Verhaegen development and the 5,385 home Waterford Anderson development. It became obvious that a filter addition project would be insufficient to meet future demands,” Hagen said.

Home expansion is expected to intensify after August of 2007. The permit processing records from the Building and Safety Division and the recently Processed Subdivision Maps from the Planning Department show that 943 single family homes and five multi-family units with 596 units are expected to be on the water system by August 2007.

There are an additional 193 acres of commercial projects in the pipeline during that period, including the Imperial Valley Mall Commons, El Centro Town Center Phase II and the Walmart Supercenter.