

**WELL.  
IT'S  
A  
VERY  
DEEP  
SUBJECT.**

—Betty Munson

In the May-June issue of the Journal there was a very brief report on Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency directors' authorization in their April meeting for General Manager Marina West to buy property in Johnson Valley, to drill a well to monitor water levels and quality.

The reasons reported were:

1. Johnson Valley is to be used as a recharge area.
2. Johnson Valley's production potential for water needed in other parts of the district.

**THE JOURNAL REPORT IS CHALLENGED**

In the JVIA General Meeting on May 7, director John Burkhart announced he had additional information on the hydro-geological test well mentioned in the Journal. Asked if it was a handout, he said yes, and gave it out.

When I saw a copy on Monday I was surprised to see it was instead a printout of an e-mail. It was headed "Fwd: Letter to the Editor" from John Burkhart at one address, to Lantek, John Burkhart's business. It read "Forwarded message from Marina West, BDVWA" May 6.

I assume it was to me as editor of the JV Journal, but it does not say so, and I never received it in any form except this "handout." I have edited it here for reasons of space, but I do not think anything is out of context.

Ms West began, "Regarding the intent to purchase land in Johnson Valley, the newsletter bullets are quite misleading to the casual reader and do not represent the relevant and specific reasons for this hydrogeological investigation (meeting recordings are available upon request)...."

She goes into history of BDVWA and the codes under which it operates. She says in 2006 the agency "had a vision which was to gain a better understanding of the groundwater resources and plan for infrastructure improvements including fire flow." Based on the needs (defined by the agency), a federal grant was awarded, leading to an allocation of EPA state funds, One task to be accomplished was the Johnson Valley Hydrogeologic Investigation (JVHI).

This "comprehensive data collection and evaluation" is to guide them "making sound water resources management and long-range planning decisions."

**Only one monitoring well is to be drilled because only \$180,000 remains of the funding.** She describes a 6- to 8-inch well, collection of drill cores, water production tests. Because there is a November 30 deadline on the grant, the agency feels that the purchase of land is the most cost effective avenue.

She states the questions this well will answer are:

1. What is the recharge potential of the JV Aquifer?
2. What is the production potential of the JV aquifer?
3. What is the quality of the water in the aquifer?

Ms West then goes on to say we need assistance to gain "reasonable accessibility to a potable water source" to thrive in our environment and survive."

She also says they are asking for funds from the Mojave Water Agency to complete this project.

**Nothing here refutes the Journal item #1: Johnson Valley is to be used as a recharge area.**

**DUMP AND PUMP**

If you have not heard how a "dump and pump," recharge basin works:

1. Non-drinkable water from the California Aqueduct is purchased from the Mojave Water Agency, brought through the pipeline, to be stored in an aquifer in the times when supplies are available.

The aquifer becomes a recharge basin. The theory is, when the imported water filters down it leaves its contaminants behind, and hopefully does not flow away.

2. Then water is pumped out in hopes it will be drinkable without treatment.

Think about this. The Johnson Valley Aquifer is not depleted so there is no need for recharge. No one thinks the aquifer is close to overdraft. We have "thrived and survived" through the efforts of Mother Nature, snow on the mountains and gravity. All free to us. We are blessed that there are no large industrial complexes or residential developments above us.

Why should we be forced to accept the risk of contaminating an aquifer that has served us so well?

The California Aqueduct brings water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to Southern California. A 1998 LA Times story about the Aqueduct said it, "Over the years, a number of bodies have been found in this monument to engineering and Southern California's desire for someone else's water."

Pipe bombs, junked and stolen cars, weapons, human and animal remains are found in it. Municipal water must be scrubbed clean of the residues of all this.

The aqueduct water will not be free to Bighorn going into the ground. It will not be free coming back out.

Terry Burkhart, shortly after being elected as a BDVWA director, wrote in the Nov-Dec 2007 issue of the JV Journal, "We in Bighorn are fortunate we are not yet dependent on Delta water."

**NEWSLETTER "MYTH" 2**

Back to Part 2 of the "handout" Letter to the Editor.

Ms West states, "As for 'water needed in other parts of the water district [sic]', (newsletter myth 2)."

She *immediately* describes another community's water troubles, and states one possible solution is "to find a new source of supply. The water supply in the Johnson Valley Aquifer is being "wasted, neglected, and not put to beneficial use." She states Bighorn has a duty to evaluate all alternatives and costs in providing safe and efficient water service. That could include a pipeline from the Johnson Valley Aquifer."

(We do not usually see the word "from" between "pipeline" and "Johnson Valley.")

So she verifies the Journal again: the monitoring well is to study **Johnson Valley's production potential for water needed in other parts of the district.**

She does go on to state that a pressurized water system requires the citizenry to vote themselves a long-term property tax. That part is often left out of the discussion, along with the costs of running a pipe from the main to your street, and buying a meter, and getting the water into your house. The "citizenry" actually means all property owners, not just JV residents.

She adds this well could end up replacing Well #10, and closes with this question, "Should we push forward one incremental step in planning for water in Johnson Valley or should we sit around and rot?"

**Planning for water in Johnson Valley.** This "monitoring" well can be tied into Landers at Bodick Rd., and intertie with Yucca Valley pipelines. **Johnson Valley will only need aqueduct water if the Johnson Valley Aquifer water is sold somewhere else and it goes into overdraft. If a pipeline is installed in Johnson Valley every parcel can be subject to a substantial Stand-By Fee whether or not it ever receives water.**

If the Journal item #2 was "misleading" and contained "myths," Ms West fails to make me see it.

## BIGHORN SPEAKS

• **10/1/2010 HI-DESERT STAR, BIGHORN TO PROCEED WITH JOHNSON VALLEY WATER STUDY.**

"...The project is part of the Agency's original work plan outlined in a \$477,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency in 2006.

"The grant was set to expire on Nov. 30, but the agency got a one-year extension for using the funds until Nov. 30, 2011. Without the extension, the agency would probably have lost the remaining **\$96,200** in grant money.

"In her presentation to the directors, West characterized the Johnson Valley studies as determining 'the best place to obtain good quality water in quantities that will be sufficient for municipal supply,' **not for private property owner supplies.**

"The Johnson Valley studies include installing a monitoring well for less than **\$100,000.**

"West is contemplating monitoring sites south of Old Woman Springs Road near the mountains, bordered by Big Horn Road to the west and Grandview to the east."

(Existing Johnson Valley Well #10 is in this area.)

• **12/16/10 REPORT FOR THE BIGHORN PLANNING/LEGISLATIVE/ENGINEERING GRANT AND SECURITY COMMITTEE: approved 4/21/11**

"...General Manager West commented the Agency has received notice that we have exceeded maximum contamination of gross alpha in Well #2. Would it be more beneficial to just treat this water or would it be more beneficial to further develop the water supply in Johnson Valley."

"...even if these residents did not want any access to pressurized water."

Speaking of funding, Ms West goes on to say, "possibly we can combine that with an agency-wide 'standby fee' that we talked about reinstating at some point for all the remaining unconnected properties."

"General Manager West commented that the other really, really long term objective is that there will potentially be a need for a **recharge facility in Johnson Valley.**"

"...There is an awareness that we have a **surplus of water** in the Johnson Valley Groundwater Basin..."

"...the Agency has the water supply survey results...these are the reasons behind our using our general funds..."

• **IN THE 4/26/11 BDVWA MEETING** Marina West told the directors, "In looking over the information provided in the conceptual model, we decided, we being the ...folks that wrote that report, and myself, have decided we are not in need of that geophysical data, we're pretty clear on where the monitoring well needs to go. The purpose of the monitoring well is twofold. One, long-term planning, very long term, but again this is what the grant was awarded for was to look at recharge potential, same as Ames, **recharge potential for surface spreading facilities into the Johnson Valley aquifer,** and two, we would look at the **production potential.**"

(This was the source of the misleading "myths" in the Journal report.)

• **IN THE 6/2/11 JVIA GENERAL MEETING,** members asked Marina West about the well to be drilled in Johnson Valley. There was amazement when she said the budget on the well is **\$200,000. Later she said the remaining budget in the EPA grant is \$200,000.**

Q. Will the well be put to use afterwards?

WEST: it is a monitoring well. It will be used for monitoring only. Just to monitor, not to pump.



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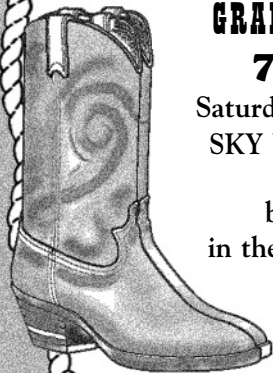
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Q. Why is it necessary to monitor the area?  
WEST: We have all that documented, I'm not prepared to give...we have the information.

Q. Could it be put to use later?

WEST: If we could turn it into a hauling station down the road, that's a potential.

(The "handout" stated it could replace Well #10.)

Q. Could you just guess how much that would cost?

WEST: All I'll say is, in the survey one of the questions asked was, would you rather have a pressurized system or would you rather have redundancy in the hauling system and the answer to redundancy was no, and the answer to a pressurized system was yes.

(The survey referred to is last year's anonymous questionnaire sent to JV property owners. Bighorn uses it to bolster their plans saying a majority said they would like to have a pressurized water system).

Q. What's the total population of Johnson Valley? Does anybody know?

WEST: We surveyed 1200 private properties.

Q. ...how many are even being used? We've got probably 300 people living here. My great-great-grandkids would not be able to pay for it.

WEST: If any piped water comes through, each private property owner will make that decision. It's not our decision, it's if the public wants it.

Q. Then why do you keep pushing it?

WEST: We're not pushing anything.

Terry Burkhart then cited the questionnaire. Discussion about the validity of the survey also raised the questions about those who did not receive a questionnaire, and those who received empty envelopes.

Roger Taylor stated that as a contractor he had put in main water lines, and the cost to get the JV roads reconstructed to successfully put a main line or offshoots to individual houses would be astronomical; just to do the roads, before you even start with the pipe.

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So the location of the monitoring?/pumping? well is still not announced; the budget for the well seems to have increased remarkably in the last 8 months (if there is an explanation for this, I have missed it), and the misleading myths in the May-June Journal all seem to be true according to the record.

The carrot of an almost unimaginable pressurized system bringing water to your house is again morphing into a system for selling the water out of the JV Aquifer till it is depleted and "really, really long term" planning to recharge it with California Aqueduct water.

***It does not matter if you want piped water or not.***