



Mesa Water FAQs-HB Ocean Desalter

What is the Mesa Consolidated Water District (Mesa Water) position on the concept of ocean desalination?

Given the water-supply challenges California faces, multiple sources will be necessary to meet future needs. Mesa Water supports the development of cost-effective and environmentally sensitive sources of water, including recycling, groundwater clean-up, conservation, and desalination.

What is Mesa Water's position on the proposed Huntington Beach Seawater Desalination facility (HB Ocean Desalter)?

Mesa Water supports desalination as an added source of water. In July 2009, the Board voted to approve a Memo of Understanding supporting the potential HB Ocean Desalter project because it can possibly provide -- using environmentally safe technologies -- a new, reliable, quality water supply that is appropriately priced. Any further action by the Mesa Water Board with respect to this project will protect the interests of Mesa Water and our customers.

What is the status of the HB Ocean Desalter EIR?

Questions regarding the status of approvals for the HB Ocean Desalter are best directed to the City of Huntington Beach as the lead agency for the EIR -- www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/government/departments/Planning/major/poseidon.cfm. Mesa Water does not have approval authority over the project.

Where can I see a map of the proposed HB Ocean Desalter pipeline running through parts of Mesa Water's service area?

A variety of potential pipeline routes are still being studied by the City of Huntington Beach which is the lead agency for the EIR -- www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/government/departments/Planning/major/poseidon.cfm. When a proposed route is formally presented to Mesa Water, our Board of Directors will consider it in a public hearing that includes opportunity for customer input.

Does Mesa Water need desalinated water to supplement its existing supplies?

No. Mesa Water would use desalinated water as a backup supply and not as our primary source of water. Mesa Water is in the fortunate position to have local groundwater as its primary water source from our groundwater basin, pumped by Mesa Water's clear water and colored water wells. Furthermore, thanks to Mesa Water's good planning to improve its Colored Water Treatment Facility, Mesa Water is working to become independent of all other water sources. Additionally, water from the HB Ocean Desalter could be used to supplement these supplies during planned or unexpected supply reductions or interruptions due to unexpected circumstances, such as an uncontrollable catastrophe or during peak drought conditions.



What would be the benefit to Mesa Water’s customers if Mesa Water entered into an agreement for the use of its OC-44 pipeline?

Participating in this desalinated water pipeline could provide potential benefits to Mesa Water’s customers, including: 1) the potential replacement of a \$60 million aging Mesa Water pipeline at no cost to our customers; 2) the potential payment of access charges to Mesa Water for use of the pipeline to help ease pressure on our rates; and, 3) Mesa Water’s possible use of a limited amount of the desalinated water to diversify and improve our water supply reliability.

What would be the benefit to the region if Mesa Water entered into an agreement with for the use of its OC-44 pipeline?

Mesa Water’s potential agreement for use of our pipeline would help the overall water reliability picture in our larger community of Orange County. Mesa Water is a cooperative regional agency and, if other public water suppliers in Orange County need this desalinated water, Mesa Water’s pipeline is the only existing opportunity to transport this supply to them. Desalinated water would help make Orange County’s water supply more diverse and less reliant on unreliable imported supplies. Currently, the proposed HB Ocean Desalter project is supported by the majority of Orange County water districts.

How would Mesa Water work to limit potential construction impacts if it were to enter into an agreement for the use of its OC-44 pipeline?

Mesa Water intends to be deeply involved in all matters related to the potential pipeline’s construction. Because the new pipeline would ultimately be owned by Mesa Water, we would oversee its permitting and construction. As advocates for our customers, we would work with the City of Costa Mesa to make sure protections are put in place to reduce impacts on surrounding neighbors and the environment. In other words, the work would be performed under the scrutiny of local agencies concerned about local interests.

What financial protections would be in place to protect Mesa Water if it were to enter into an agreement for the use of its OC-44 pipeline?

As with all construction projects, Mesa Water will ensure that the appropriate bonds, insurance, and indemnifications are in place prior to the start of any work.

Would Mesa Water be obligated to purchase desalinated water if it were to enter into an agreement for the use of its OC-44 pipeline?

No. Mesa Water would only purchase desalinated water if the price was right and there was a need. If not, we wouldn’t buy it.



What is Mesa Water’s process for making a decision on a pipeline agreement and the purchase of desalinated water, and how is Mesa Water working to incorporate customer feedback?

Mesa Water is committed to a transparent, open government process. As such, the Mesa Water Board and staff have had several public meetings and workshops on this issue. Moving forward, Mesa Water plans to hold additional public meetings on this issue, including discussions and updates of information pertaining to this issue as an agenda item at Mesa Water Board meetings, which are open to the public.

Additionally, Mesa Water believes that the viability of the HB Ocean Desalter project hinges on whether the Carlsbad Desalter project moves forward or not with a user agreement and funding. The Carlsbad Desalter project, which is further along than the HB Ocean Desalter project, has been in process for over 12 years now. Therefore, because Mesa Water is committed to the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, we believe it is most prudent to wait and see if the Carlsbad Desalter project advances before Mesa Water expends large amounts of staff time and consultant expenses on the HB Ocean Desalter project.

Is desalinated water safe?

Yes. Desalinated water is held to the same strict State and Federal standards for water quality as the water that currently flows from your tap. Any desalinated water delivered to Mesa Water would be regularly tested to ensure it complies with water quality standards and is safe for our customers.

What is the sodium level of desalinated water versus regular fresh water?

The reverse osmosis desalination process results in very pure, soft water with a lower sodium content than local sources of water. Even so, any desalinated water delivered to Mesa Water would be held to strict State and Federal water quality standards, including for minerals such as sodium, and would be regularly tested to make sure it is safe for our customers.

Is desalinated water a cost-effective source of supply?

Currently, there are 21 Orange County water agencies who will work on negotiating price terms as potential purchasers of water from the HB Ocean Desalter. The outcome of these efforts will determine if this source of desalinated water is a cost-effective option for Mesa Water, compared to the price of water that is available to us by developing more local supplies or from our regional supplier, the Municipal Water District of Orange County.

Does Mesa Water have all the information it needs to make a decision on this matter?

At this point, there is not enough information available for Mesa Water to make a decision on this matter. The Mesa Water Board’s goal for matter is to adequately identify risks and impacts, mitigate concerns, and assure that the project results in added benefits for the District and our customers. Mesa Water plans to fully vet the benefits of the proposed project versus potential drawbacks before making any decisions.