

## EIR on Ground Water Management on Hold

**W**ORK on an environmental impact report (EIR) that was to determine the content of ordinances to protect the Seaside Ground Water Basin has been placed on hold. The District had planned to release a draft of the EIR in October. But that work was placed on hold after the privately owned California-American Water Co. filed suit against the cities, golf courses and well owners in the basin, claiming the company has prescriptive rights to the underground water.

Cal-Am's suit attempts to deny the authority of the Water District, which has the legal authority to regulate the ground water basin on behalf of the public. Monterey County Superior Court has subsequently allowed the District to intervene in Cal-Am's legal action. The entire action could be delayed, however, because one of the well owners Cal-Am is suing is in bankruptcy proceedings.

The District has been exploring and monitoring the ground water basin for more than 20 years. Pumping increased after 1995, when the State Water Resources Control Board ordered Cal-Am to take less water from the environmentally damaged Carmel River. The increased pumping has resulted in a lower water table with wells taking out more water than the underground aquifers can yield without risking seawater intrusion from the ocean.

The District earlier this year wrote to the state water board, asking it to consider letting Cal-Am take more water from the river in wet years in order to lessen the impacts on the Seaside basin.

The Cal-Am lawsuit and its outcome are important because about a fourth of the Monterey Peninsula water supply is taken from the Seaside basin. Cal-Am has asked the court to decide who has the rights to take how much of the water, a legal process called adjudication. It is a complicated process that requires such detailed, technical evidence that it usually takes years to get through court.

As part of the suit, Cal-Am is also asking the court to decide who has the right to store water in the underground space made available by excessive pumping, a determination that would be critical to plans to pump Carmel River water or desalinated seawater to the basin and store it in the underground aquifers until needed.

For the past seven years the District has been testing the possibilities of injecting water from elsewhere and pumping it out when needed. As part of that work, the District injected 165 acre-feet of Carmel River water into the Seaside basin during the winter months this year, and is now taking out twice that amount to evaluate water quality effects to the aquifer.

## Rebates Available for More Household Appliances

**M**ONETARY rebates will be available for installation of a variety of water-saving appliances and systems within the Water District and the Cal-Am service areas, when the District's rebate program expands on Dec. 1.


Residents who replace existing appliances with washing machines that use no more than 28 gallons of water for a complete cycle, dishwashers that use no more than 7.66 gallons, dual-flush toilets that allow .8-gallon or 1.6-gallons choices, and ultra-low flush toilets can get \$100 from a conservation program funded by the District.


Residents who install hot water demand pumping systems can also get \$100 rebates. Cisterns that collect rainwater to use in established irrigation systems can get rebates of \$25 per 100 gallons of storage capacity, up to a maximum of 3,000 gallons.


The rebates will be available to Cal-Am customers in the main system on the Peninsula and in the Hidden Hills, Bishop (Pasadera) and Ryan Ranch units. Private well users that tap into the Monterey Peninsula Water Resource System are also eligible.

For complete details, qualification restrictions and applications, check the District Web site at [www.mpwmd.dst.ca.us](http://www.mpwmd.dst.ca.us), or call 658-5601.

## QUARTERLY UPDATE

 Cal-Am customers on the Monterey Peninsula used 11,130 acre-feet of water from the Carmel River last year—1.4% less than 11,285 acre-feet the state allows. The State Water Resources Control Board set the limit in 1995, when it issued Order 95-10 to establish water rights and controls on the environmentally damaged river. Exceeding the state limit sets off more stringent conservation measures and possible fines. The Peninsula has gone over the annual limit only once, and the state assessed a financial penalty.

 Conservation cut water use in the Hidden Hills development off the Monterey-Salinas Highway corridor by 6 acre-feet last year. For the water year that ended Sept. 30, 2003, the area was 8 acre-feet below the annual production limit, markedly better than the 2 acre-feet below in the water year that ended Sept. 30, 2002. That heavy usage prompted a water conservation program for residents, and the overall system use dropped even as more houses were built in Hidden Hills last year.

 Ground water tests along the beach in Seaside, Sand City and Fort Ord involve sophisticated sonar, seismic and electronic equipment that will ultimately measure the shapes of the underground aquifer and the depths of the water. But a very important element of those state-of-the-art hydrogeology tests is a worker with a sledgehammer, who will periodically strike steel plates on the ground so the sophisticated instruments will have sound waves to gauge.