



# County of Yolo

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625 Court Street, Room 204 Woodland, CA 95695-1268 (530) 666-8622

District Office: 600 A Street, Suite B  
Davis, CA 95616  
(530) 757-5557 Office

## **DON SAYLOR** Supervisor, Second District

October 9, 2018

Dear North Davis Meadows residents,

This letter provides an update on the approved North Davis Meadows (NDM) Water Consolidation Project, to connect the NDM public water system to the City of Davis to meet the State of California's drinking water quality as well as State and City fire protection standards.

This is a significant issue for the residents of NDM. As you know, the NDM water system has been out of compliance since 2009. Numerous options have been explored during the past nine years. All have costs and risks.

To make sure we hadn't missed anything, subsequent to the March 2018 decision to proceed with the approved project, my office and other County staff engaged with the NDM community from March to September 2018 to reexamine the assumptions and options to meet the State requirements. Documents reviewed during this period, including the report summarizing the options under discussion and my project update letter from August 3<sup>rd</sup>, can be found on the North Davis Meadows website: [www.YoloCounty.org/North-Davis-Meadows-CSA](http://www.YoloCounty.org/North-Davis-Meadows-CSA) (Select the Water Quality link.)

### **Project Update - September 25, 2018 Board of Supervisors Meeting**

At the September 25 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board received an update on the Water Consolidation Project. As part of this update, the Board approved an amendment to the West Yost Engineering contract for design of the project that is expected to result in \$150,000 to \$300,000 in construction cost savings based on reduced fire flow calculations. In addition, the Board heard public comment from community members regarding various topics. A link to the staff report and video of the Board discussion is on the NDM Water Quality Website. Following is a summary of the action and discussion on September 25, 2018.

- **West Yost Engineering Contract Amendment #4.** Through the course of reviewing all project information, we received approval from the City of Davis Fire Marshal and Public Works staff for a level of fire flow reduced from the City's standard. The project was designed based on the City of Davis requirement for all new water connections to meet fire flow of 1,500 gallons per minute (GPM) at 20 pounds per square inch (PSI) for 2 hours. Based on a later discussion with the City and the fact that homes were constructed with fire sprinklers, the Fire Marshal revised the requirement to allow the project to be sized to meet lower requirements of 1,000 GPM at 20 PSI for 1 hour. Pursuant to the contract amendment adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 25, West

Yost Engineering will now re-model and resize the system and construction documents. The cost of this redesign is \$22,000.

- **Proposal to Reassess Deep Well Option.** Also during the September 25 Board meeting, and previously at the September 11 Board meeting, some community members requested the Board of Supervisors put forward a new Proposition 218 process to allow the community to fund a \$90,000 exploratory well and evaluate the quality of water for a well at 1,000 to 1,800 feet deep. This exploratory well proposal was expressed as a first step to a deep well alternative to the approved project. At the request of some NDM residents, engineers from a local hydrology firm provided an estimated cost of an exploratory well at \$248,650, rather than \$90,000. These engineers also advised that a deep well project should anticipate wellhead treatment because it is likely that deep wells will exceed the contaminant levels for manganese, arsenic, and in the future, hexavalent chromium. The total cost estimate they provided was incomplete for many reasons.
  - Their exploratory well estimate does not include the cost of staff time to prepare a Proposition 218 measure, or a financing mechanism to pay for the exploratory well prior to the collection of the 2019/20 property taxes (see NDM Water Quality website for a link to “Exploratory Well Process” which includes the Proposition 218 process).
  - Their deep well cost estimate does not include the costs to upsize the NDM distribution pipes to support fire flow and the cost of a publicly bid project with prevailing wage rates, as required for county contracts.
  - Their deep well cost estimate notes that an additional \$1.5 to \$3.5 million (depending on the contaminant) should be budgeted for wellhead treatment. This cost does not include a plan for managing the utility costs and treatment waste stream.

County staff’s preliminary research on costs related to exploratory wells can be found in the September 25 staff report.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors to do everything we can to assure public health and safety. The Board did not choose to pursue an exploratory well approach on September 25 because it is not a solution, it’s simply a point in time assessment. Moving down the path of funding an exploratory well would essentially be choosing to reject the current consolidation project due to the length of time for an exploratory well to be complete, the cost of the approach itself being in the same ball park as the approved project, and the risk of increased construction costs and interest rates associated with delaying the approved Water Consolidation Project.

County staff and I engaged in the re-evaluation subsequent to the March 2018 decision willing to change course if given a viable solution with substantial consensus to support an alternative project financially. After reviewing all the data and reports and listening to community and subject-matter expert feedback, we have concluded that the approved project to connect to the City of Davis water system remains the best solution. The approved Water Consolidation Project is the only option that offers a guaranteed solution to meet drinking water quality standards and fire protection at a known cost. It provides the least risk for long-term public health and fire protection. It also assures that future capital costs are shared among thousands of Davis ratepayers rather than just the 95 households in NDM.

On September 25, other Supervisors stated that while moving forward with the approved Water Consolidation Project may not be popular with some, it's the responsible thing to do. They stated that State water quality requirements in future years are only going to get more rigid and expensive. They commented that there are risks and potential major costs with all options, but going forward with City water guarantees a supply into the future and spreads the risk over thousands of people in the system. They reminded us the County is not a water company, and continuing with a well system relies on the County to manage that responsibility.

**Potential Legal Action**

I want to make sure you are aware of a lawsuit filed by three North Davis Meadows residents against the NDM County Service Area (CSA) and Yolo County. The lawsuit challenges the recent water fee changes pursuant to Proposition 218. As you know, all costs necessary to support the operations of the CSA are paid by the CSA. Therefore, the North Davis Meadows CSA would be responsible for the defense costs for litigation filed against the CSA. We will keep you posted on this matter as it progresses.

**Next Steps**

I am deeply grateful to the NDM residents, representing all perspectives, who have diligently invested their time and energy to solve this complex problem facing the community. I remain committed to work with all members of the community to examine options that reduce irrigation costs, such as with individual or shared ag wells for irrigation. I am also committed to continued exploration of solutions to reduce or defer costs for low-income or fixed-income individuals.

In shared service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Don Saylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Saylor".

Don Saylor, Yolo County Supervisor, District 2