

INDEPENDENT STUDY CONCLUDES UPCOUNTRY WATER PUMPING SYSTEM IS UNRELIABLE AND RISKS CATASTROPHIC FAILURE

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(*Sutter Creek*) Upcountry water pumps face “increasing risk of catastrophic failure and damage resulting in an extended period of loss of water” to customers within the next five years, according to an independent engineering report presented at the Amador Water Agency Board of Directors meeting Thursday.

One of the two pump stations that lift water from the Mokelumne River to AWA’s Buckhorn Water Treatment plant “is unreliable and can only provide approximately half the required firm capacity to meet current demands in the summer,” reported Alex Peterson, civil engineer with Kennedy/Jenks Consultants, who performed the comprehensive third-party examination and analysis on the aging Central Amador Water Project (CAWP) pump system.

Peterson also told the Board that the high pressure pipeline that runs up the steep canyon from the river is losing its protective coating, making the pipeline vulnerable to corrosion and damage. Peterson’s report warned “a high pressure leak could create significant damage to the hillside and be difficult to repair.”

Peterson commended AWA staff for keeping the system operating under challenging conditions, but concluded, “In my opinion, these facilities are at or beyond the end of their useful life. The consequence of doing nothing to the system will be ongoing, expensive repairs.” His written report concluded, “We recommend that these pump stations at a minimum be replaced.”

The Water Agency has recognized the deteriorating condition of the 33 year-old CAWP pumping system and began looking for long term replacement options a dozen years ago. In 2010, AWA Directors approved constructing a gravity supply line that would eliminate the aging pump and pipeline system and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has approved a \$5.1 million grant and \$8.3 million loan to pay for a gravity-fed pipeline.

The full report, “Raw Water Pump Station Assessment” by Kennedy/Jenks Consultants, is available on the Agency website at www.amadorwater.org or at the Agency office.

In other AWA news:

- Some AWA customers who receive their utility bills every other month will soon be getting a monthly bill. AWA Office Manager Karen Gish told AWA Directors the Agency gets almost daily

requests from customers asking for monthly billing. Delinquency rates in the systems with bi-monthly billings can be twice as high as in systems with monthly billings. On Thursday Directors approved a four-month trial monthly billing program, starting in the Lake Camanche Village water system, to confirm that additional meter-reading and billing can successfully be implemented using existing staff. Customer notifications will be going out as early as next week.

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