

CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

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Dear CCSD Customer,

The first two months of 2015 have been an eventful time for Cambria. On January 20, the community marked a major milestone when the Emergency Water Supply (EWS) project began production of purified water for CCSD customers. Since then, the EWS has been running 40 hours a week in what I like to call, “shakedown” mode: The main purpose is to fine-tune operations, bring unforeseen problems to light and correct them, and train CCSD staff.

I’ll have more to say below about the progress of this start-up operation and what you can expect in coming months. But first I want to look back at where we’ve been. Just a year ago, you may recall, Cambria faced a dire situation. Rainfall in the 2013-2014 season had been far short of normal, continuing an already serious drought into its third year. Levels of our production wells were already critically low in February. In response to this crisis, the CCSD took two significant actions. First, it imposed stringent water conservation measures, among the most severe in the state. Second, it moved forward to build the EWS.

As you know, of course, Cambria did *not* run out of water last year. Credit for that goes to your conservation efforts. If you had not cut consumption by more than 40% during the long dry season, our wells might indeed have run dry. With the EWS not yet on line, you, the customer, were our only line of defense.

With the EWS now available as an emergency backup supply, 2015 will be different in at least one important way: Even if the drought continues into a fourth year, we do not face the threat of running out of water. The EWS is capable of producing nearly 40 acre-feet of water per month (running 24/7), which is close to the average monthly water consumption in Cambria last year. In other words, we now have a margin of safety – you can call it “drought insurance” -- that we didn’t have before. No longer is Cambria playing Russian roulette with its water supply.

This brings me back to the present, and to the current EWS operations. You may have seen news reports of problems in the start-up phase such as noise complaints and permit violations. We have made public statements and issued a press release (posted on our website) to address these issues in detail, so I won’t discuss them at length here. Suffice it to say that we are working with the agencies, such as the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and State Parks, to resolve problems as they arise during the EWS shakedown. We treat these agencies as partners, not adversaries, and we want them to be closely involved with the EWS project every step of the way.

What *doesn’t* make the news is what I want to highlight here. This is the fact that the EWS is working. It is producing potable water and injecting it into the San Simeon Creek well field *exactly as it was designed to do*. This should be reassuring to anyone who wonders if the project will be ready to serve Cambria if and when it is needed. The bottom line is that it will be ready. We know this from the way it is performing now.

What lies ahead? First, the three-month start-up operation of the EWS is due to end in April. After that, the decision about when to re-start it will depend on rainfall and well levels. As I write this, the rainfall outlook does not look promising. A wet December was followed by an extremely dry January and a sub-normal February. If March does not produce one of its occasional “miracles,” it seems likely that the EWS will be called into service sometime this summer. Under terms of its Emergency Coastal Development Permit (CDP), we will have to keep the stringent Stage

Three conservation measures in effect when it is operating. However, as I noted above, we will have a level of security we did not have last year.

In reference to that Emergency CDP, I want to bring you up-to-date on our progress toward obtaining a regular CDP to allow more flexible use of the EWS. We have contracted with RBF Consulting (a company of Michael Baker International) to complete an environmental impact report (EIR), which is needed to complete our project's regular coastal development permit application. We expect the EIR to be completed this summer, after which we will have the information in hand that is needed by the County to complete processing of our regular CDP application. Because the CDP is appealable at various stages beginning at the Planning Commission and ending at the California Coastal Commission, we will be seeking and encouraging your continuing support as we navigate the regular coastal development permitting process.

Why do we go to this effort to get a "regular" permit when the "emergency" permit is already in hand? First, this process is abiding by the County's Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance, which is reflected in the terms of the emergency permit that require us to do so. Second, only a regular permit would give us the ability to use the EWS without also imposing severe restrictions on water use. Cambrians are paying for this system; they should be able to use it without suffering the level of deprivation and inconvenience they have endured over the past year. Third, a regular permit is needed to make full use of the EWS as a means not only of reacting to severe shortages but *preventing* them as well. In the long run, I envision the EWS as a key part of Cambria's "water portfolio," including all elements of production, recycling and storage. The best way to ensure a stable supply and cost-effective delivery of water is to have all parts of the water system available when they can be best put to use. To do this, we need as much flexibility as possible in operation of the EWS, and only a regular CDP can provide this.

The EWS is the big story for the CCSD right now, but it is not the only one. We were pleased to learn in February that we will be receiving a state grant of \$307,896 to cover most of the cost of rehabilitating Santa Rosa Well 3 (SR 3) and its associated iron and manganese plant, which was also completed last year as part of our drought emergency response. We are taking steps to begin development of the public recreational facilities on the Fiscalini Ranch near the Rodeo Grounds, and we plan shortly to award a contract for replacement of the Fiscalini water tank near the Top of the World neighborhood. We also have completed major improvements to Liftstation 9 and Liftstation B and are in the process of making major improvements to Liftstation A1. Currently, the Wastewater Plant is being evaluated for upgrades that would result in improved effluent water quality, reductions in nitrates and improved pretreatment and flow equalization capabilities.

Finally, I want to thank you for all you have done to bring Cambria through these challenging times. We may face new challenges, but with your help I feel confident that we will be more than ready for them.

Sincerely yours,

Jerry Gruber
General Manager
Cambria Community Services District