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## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

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### **MAYOR HILARY BRYANT AND CITY MANAGER MARTÍN BERNAL ISSUE STATEMENT ON DESAL PROJECT**

*RECOMMEND THERE NOT BE A VOTE IN 2014, WHILE SHIFTING  
FOCUS TO CONSERVATION AND ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INPUT TO  
CRAFT A NEW VISION FOR THE CITY'S WATER SUPPLY*

SANTA CRUZ, CA – AUGUST 20, 2013 – Santa Cruz Mayor Hilary Bryant and City Manager Martín Bernal today issued a joint statement regarding the proposed regional desalination project.

*From Mayor Hilary Bryant:*

“The City of Santa Cruz has an obligation to provide a clean and reliable source of water to our residents, businesses, organizations and visitors. Water is the most essential resource that the City provides to our citizens. It sustains our lives, our economy and environment, and ultimately the future of our community.

Following an initial 60-day period and a 30-day extension, the official comment period for the desal project Environmental Impact Report closed on August 12. Project staff has conducted an initial review of the more than 400 comments made by members of our community and have briefed me. It is gratifying to see more people taking an active interest in issues related to our water supply, and potential solutions, than in recent memory.

While it will take several months to review and respond to all of the submitted comments, a few themes are evident:

- The Santa Cruz community is not ready for desalination at this time and we need a reset in the ongoing conversation on water supply and desal issues.
- Our water challenges in the City of Santa Cruz are part of a regional issue and need a regional approach.
- A greater focus on water conservation practices and potential is needed.
- Likely impacts of drought events need further exploration.
- The vital link between water supply and local economic health is not fully understood at this time.

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Today the City Manager and I recommend a new course in order to secure our water future. I have deep pride in our community and am encouraged that so many people are engaged now in the future of our water supply. I look forward to the next chapter in the discussion.”

*From City Manager Martín Bernal:*

“The City of Santa Cruz clearly needs to redefine how we are engaging with the community on the subject of water supply. Therefore, I am recommending a four-part plan to the City Council:

1. A vote on desalination should not be pursued by the City in 2014.
2. In order to complete the significant public investment made to date in the draft Environmental Impact Report, to respond to comments by community members offered on the draft EIR, and in order to inform future discussions about the City’s water supply, the EIR will be completed.
3. I will ask the Water Department to bring forward a plan to engage our community to become a top water conservation city in California.
4. I will bring forward a community-involvement plan to City Council to look further into the key areas of interest that have developed and to craft a clear vision for the future of Santa Cruz’s water supply.

The City’s mission-critical obligation to provide a clean and reliable water source is threatened by dry conditions, climate change and state and federal regulators who seek more of our water to support critical fish habitat. We owe it to Santa Cruz to provide enough water to sustain our way of life regardless of these challenges.”

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