

## Officials Eye Desalination To Solve Shortages

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**MONTEREY, Calif.** -- From Monterey to Santa Cruz, local water agencies are searching for ways to provide clean water in an area that simply has too few sources to tap.

Monterey residents face severe cutbacks over the next few years, as the local water agency tries to follow court orders to use less water from local rivers and groundwater basins. Two thirds of the planet is covered in water, but just 3 percent of that vast supply is readily available for drinking.

In the Monterey Bay area, the water that comes from the faucet comes from either local rivers, like the Carmel River to the south, or from reservoirs like Loch Lomand to the north.

Even with normal annual rainfall, the slowly growing population is taxing water supplies and climate change threatens to lessen the chances that local reservoirs will be full in the future.

Local water agencies have been looking into building land-based desalination plants to supplement the water supply.

Many opponents to the plan said they are worried about the consequences of a larger plant with huge pipes pulling water from sea to shore, then dumping excess salt and brine back into the bay.

Amanda Brock, CEO of the Water Standard Company, said they have a better idea. She proposed placing a ship carrying a desalination plant a few miles out to sea over the deep waters of the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary.

The ship would drop large pipes deep down below most of the precious fish and other sea life protected by the sanctuary. The ship would then suck up the ocean water, use some special filters designed by the Water Standard Company and turn the salt water into drinking water.

"Because we are offshore, a couple of things differentiate us," Brock said. "One is the water quality. It's actually better than doing it on land and we aren't having a large

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land footprint on obviously very expensive and valuable coastal land. We're out to sea."

The concept is getting the environmentally friendly approval of Dr. George Somero, the director of Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove.

"They're going deep down enough so most of the shallow water life that is the base of the food chain shouldn't be affected by this," Somero said. "If they release the salt with this process, I don't think it's a real threat in the shallow waters."

The treated drinking water could either be piped or shipped to shore.

Company officials said the desalination ship could meet the daily demands of three-quarters of a million people.

The Water Standard Company is preparing to retrofit its first desalination ship. It could be ready by next year.

The Monterey Peninsula Water Management Agency is moving toward a land-based desalination solution based in Sand City, but Water Standard Company officials said they are continuing to pitch the ship solution to Central Coast water districts.