SWEETWATER SPRINGS WATER DISTRICT

TO: Board of Directors **AGENDA NO. V-E**

FROM: Steve Mack, General Manager

Meeting Date: February 7, 2013

Subject: DISCUSSION/ACTION RE PROPOSED CELL TOWER AT HIGHLAND TREATMENT FACILITY

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive a report on discussions with AT&T representatives re leasing land at the Highland Treatment Facility for use as a cell tower.

FISCAL IMPACT: none.

DISCUSSION:

At the January Board meeting, Board members had questions about the County process for permitting a cell tower at the Highland site and about notification of customers. Director Holmer agreed to contact County PRMD regarding the process. Via email he asked Pete Parkinson, PRMD Director the following question: "We have questions regarding the process for approval. Specifically, is the County the lead agency for environmental review? How is CEQA handled on these proposals? Are they categorically exempt, or is an initial study necessary?"

and received the following emailed response:

"The involvement of SSWD makes the lead agency question a little bit complicated. If a project is "carried out" by a public agency, then that agency is the CEQA lead agency. However, I would characterize this as a project that is "carried out" by a private entity (AT&T), but on public agency property. So that means the County would be the CEQA lead agency. Most cell towers need an initial study and Mitigated Negative Dec, but it depends on what is proposed.

Likewise the permitting process depends on the size and zoning. That of course is AT&T's job, but someone from SSWD can get that info too if you're interested.

Not all cell tower proposals are controversial, but requiring AT&T to do outreach to the neighbors is a very good idea. That's helpful to everyone in the process."

AT&T is starting the process with the County without a lease agreement (which is still being reviewed by their legal counsel.

Some Board members (and me too) have wondered what a “cell tower tree” looks like. Below is a photo of one off River Road across from the parking lot for Sunset Beach. I had never noticed it until I looked for it. (hint – it’s in the middle of the photo)