SWEETWATER SPRINGS WATER DISTRICT

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

FROM: Steve Mack, General Manager

Meeting Date : August 4, 2016

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION/ACTION RE EL BONITA WELL FIELD INUNDATION PREPARATIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive a presentation by the General Manager regarding progress in resolving issues regarding flooding impacts on the El Bonita Well Field and the Guerneville Water Supply System.

FISCAL IMPACT: none

DISCUSSION:

The El Bonita Well Field is at a relatively low level near the Russian River. It is the source of water for the Guerneville Water Supply System of Sweetwater Springs Water District. When the River water elevation gets to 29 feet the well field starts to become inundated. Flood stage for the Russian River at Guerneville is officially at 32 feet elevation. The near flooding in March raised an issue that is concerning to staff - we learned in preparation for anticipated flooding of the El Bonita Well Field that the State Division of Drinking Water would expect the District to issue boil water notices if the wells at that location need to be operated while under water. We had thought that we had addressed that issue to the State's satisfaction (the last large inundation and boil water notice was in 2006 and was due to flood water infiltrating the raw water line because of a leak in the raw water line from the wells) but we learned during this last event we had not.

District staff had a meeting with State staff on April 28, 2016, to discuss this matter. The State staffs' concern is that they are concerned that flood waters could contaminate the pumped water by negative pressures somewhere along the piping that is under the flood waters. Our position is that District water is continually monitored for turbidity which should show increased turbidity and that we have a plan for addressing this situation, that boil water notices are a hardship for everyone, if not needed, and we want to find out what we can do to satisfy the Division of Drinking Water staff so that boil water notices are only used when needed. At the end of that meeting we agreed that District staff would work on solutions. We offered to get our well maintenance people involved which State staff stated was a good idea.

Since that meeting staff have been looking at alternatives and have gotten our well maintenance consultants involved. Progress:

- Ron Foster, owner of Ground Water Well and Pump has sent a letter to the Division of Drinking Water stating his opinion of what we are doing provides

safe water during inundations. Mr. Foster believes, based on years of high-level work, that our operation provides safe water during inundations.

- State Division of Drinking Water Staff have acknowledged receiving the letter and want a District response plan for review prior to having a meeting which could happen in late August or September.

- Staff is preparing the response plan and it should be ready for submittal to the State in two weeks. The response plan has a history of flood inundation at the well field, the District's long-term maintenance program for the wells, the District's flood preparation plan, District operations at the Highland Treatment Plant during flooding, and recovery from flooding. This is the current staff plan for operations during inundations at El Bonita. With the included added written explanations of our operations, this may be acceptable to Division of Drinking Water staff, but it wasn't at the April meeting and more may be needed.

- We may need a physical solution for the flooding issue and one option is to seal the wellhead vaults during flooding events. Staff met with James Piazza regarding sealing the well vaults on a temporary basis during flooding. Mr. Piazza has done similar work for the City of Santa Rosa wastewater treatment facility. He will submit a proposal for sealing the 3 vaults at El Bonita. We would consider taking this approach if the Division of Drinking Water does not approve our current operations plan, agrees that sealing the well vaults is an appropriate solution, and the cost is reasonable.