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GENERAL MANAGER

Santa Margarita Water District

November 3, 2009

Dear Resident:

As you undoubtedly know, due to an algae bloom in the Upper Oso Reservoir, nearby neighborhoods have experienced odors this past week. Algae blooms are a natural phenomenon but their frequency, duration and intensity can vary due to several factors, including sunlight, weather and water temperatures, and nutrients in the water.

This recent occurrence is attributed to weather-related conditions (including primarily temperature changes and winds) that caused mixing of water from the lower depths of the reservoir with water closer to the surface, thereby creating ideal factors for algae growth. This incident was not related to or caused by changed operational practices or fiscal concerns.

The reservoir, which provides water strictly for greenbelt irrigation and not to homes, has been operated consistently the last 30 years it has been in service; including the continuous use of pumps to circulate water. Despite the District's weekly water quality monitoring and continual use of pumps, conditions literally changed overnight last week without warning.

To quickly restore normal reservoir conditions, oxygen levels are being increased and over two million gallons a day of fresh water is being added. Oxygen levels in the lake are increasing each day and continual improvement is expected over the course of the week.

Daily water samples are being taken to measure progress. Also, extensive air monitoring around the lake and in neighborhoods with prevalent odors has been performed daily. While the odor is unpleasant, all tests indicate non-detectable levels of harmful gases and no health risks associated with air quality.

To avoid future incidents, a more comprehensive operating model is under development with emphasis on providing predictive data. This will enable preemptive operational procedures adaptive to weather, biological, water quality and other changed conditions affecting the reservoir. The more comprehensive model will be accompanied by additional operating facilities both for purposes of avoiding future incidents and providing back-up and flexible operational features.

If you have any questions, please call 459-6420. Daily updates are posted on the District's website so residents have access to the most current information at all times.

Thank you for your patience.

John J. Schatz

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