

New Lake of the Woods well comes up dry

The 500-foot hole drilled by this rig found little water—but other plans move forward.

By Patric Hedlund

"This is 0 for 6," an onlooker said this week, referring to another 500-foot dry hole drilled into the flood plain in Lake of the Woods. The ongoing quest to find a new source of water for the parched community placed

visible drilling rig between Lockwood Valley Road and Frazier Mountain Park Road with an American flag flying from its top for weeks. The crew toiled before and after Memorial Day while the hopes of the community rose.

But Lake of the Woods Mutual Water Company President Robert Stowell on Friday, June 5 received a report from Engineer Curtis Skaggs of Dee Jasper and Associates: "The logs showed the alluvium extends to a depth of 176 feet and it has been completely dewatered. The hole from 176 to 500 feet is hard rock." Rafael Molina, Jr. (who maintains the LOWMWC system) said a casing will be put in the hole to see if they

can coax a small amount of water from the alluvium, which is normally the water-bearing rock. But Lake of the Woods started hauling water again on Saturday to fill its supply tanks so residents will have water for drinking and hygiene. They are prohibited from irrigating outside, except with gray water.

"So if you could urge residents to not be wasteful, that would be great," Molina said. The LOW system does not have meters. It can be hard to trace those who may be abusing restrictions.

State and federal grants

Lake of the Woods has received \$1.25 million in state and federal grants since the Cuddy Hall well went dry in 2013. That money paid to explore new well sites in the search for a new water supply for engineering and construction to enhance existing wells, for construction of a new storage tank and to link meager water sources to the distribu-

tion system.

It has also paid to truck emergency water supplies when the explorations failed.

Neighbors

Meanwhile, Lake of the Woods' neighbor to the east—Frazier Park Public Utility District (FPFUD)—hit abundant water at 33 feet in the FPPUD equipment yard on Park Drive. This month FPPUD will continue drilling that well and test to confirm the water quality meets state standards.

Frazier Park received a \$500,000 grant to develop the new well. FPPUD also received a \$202,000 preplanning grant from the state to research the feasibility of joining forces with others in the area, such as Lake of the Woods. If the study shows there is ad-

equate water supply, Director Lisa Schoenberg said June 8 that she believes the FPPUD board will be open to extending their system to help supply water to their neighbor if LOW residents want that.

"If your neighbor is thirsty, and you have water, you give him a drink," said FPPUD General Manager Jonnie Allison.

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Left: LOWMWC board members listen to president Robert Stowell and Self-Help Enterprises consultant Dave Warner tell about an income survey for Lake of the Woods.

the LOWMWC board meeting Thursday, June 4.

Warner has assisted many mountain water companies to secure funding for repair and upgrade projects. He explained the problem with the state's order: "Much of this system is just one-inch metal lines. You

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Rebuilding LOW system

Before cooperation between the two systems is possible however, LOW's water distribution system must be rebuilt so that water meters can be installed for all water customers in Lake of the Woods.

"Meters are mandatory, you have received a compliance order from the state," consultant Dave Warner (from Self-Help Enterprises) explained to



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can't put a meter on a one-inch pipe."

In an interview Tuesday, June 9 he also said that trying to supply multiple homes from a 3/4 or 1-inch distribution line "is a nightmare."

Rebuilding will also stop the excessive leaking, which bleeds away almost 50% of the water that passes through the current distribution system in LOW, Warner said.

But can they afford it?

At the June 4 meeting, the consultant showed directors two applications he is working on. The first is for a million dollars in USDA funds. A preliminary application has been submitted. The other is for \$1.5 million through Kern County's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP). That must be submitted by August.

Warner said that normal terms for the funding could put help out of reach. If the district had to pay back even \$500,000 in five years—even with a low interest rate—the district wouldn't be able to accept the

neighbors are willing to take the questionnaire and pre-paid envelopes to their neighbors, to explain why participation can help solve the water problem for the community.

Lebec and Frazier Park have already

successfully completed such surveys, clearing the way for funding.

Replies to the questionnaire will be mailed by the resident directly to the consultant in Tulare County. They will be seen only by him. No neighbors will have access to the data. Names and addresses are confidential, used to confirm which households have participated. All personal data is removed from the actual report. Only the income data—with no names—is used in the report to the USDA.

If the LOW median household income is below 60% of the national median, Lake of the



Patricia Hedlund photo

Eight members of the public, the 4-member board and LOWMWC employee Diane Gustafson were at the June 4 meeting.

Casino tribe seeks MOU

A faction of the Kitanemuk, Yowlumne Tejon Indians, led by Kathryn Morgan (now known as the Tejon Indian Tribe) appeared with lawyers, a lobbyist and their Las Vegas investor at the June 2 Kern County Board of Supervisors meeting. Morgan's lawyers asked for talks with the county as a sovereign nation for a memo of understanding (MOU) as the tribe acquires "tribal lands" north of the Outlets at Tejon mall.

Delia 'Dee' Dominguez, leader of the group before the breakaway, said Morgan's faction does not represent the full tribe. She asked the board to be cautious in these dealings. —P. Hedlund

Woods water company may be eligible to obtain the funds to rebuild their system as a 100% grant rather than a loan.

That could clear the way for Lake of the Woods stakeholders to vote whether they wish to link into Frazier Park's water supply system in the future. It will also help double the amount of water available, because 50% will no longer be leaking away through the ancient pipes.

Warner asks that residents watch for the letters this month from Self-Help Enterprises that will explain the income survey.

He said he also hopes they will talk with their neighbors about why participating in the survey is helpful to everyone who lives in Lake of the Woods.