

# First of a Kind Water Recycling Plant Being Built in Marina

By KRISTA ALMANZAN · MAY 12, 2017

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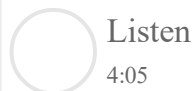
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*Mike McCullough gives a tour of the Pure Water Monterey demonstration facility Marina. The full scale version should be making water by May 2019.*

KRISTA ALMANZAN



Californians are used to the idea of recycling cans, bottles and paper. But the idea of recycling water is a little hard for some to swallow. In fact, the process is sometimes dubbed “toilet to tap.”

That’s a phrase the people at [Pure Water Monterey](#) quickly dismiss when talking about the new advanced water purification facility being built in Marina.

“Well it’s not all just waste water. It’s a unique innovative set of supplies,” says Dave Stoldt, General Manager of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, one of the partners in this project.

“We’ve got agricultural runoff, we’ve got the wash water that’s used to rinse the pre-packed lettuce and we’ve got some storm water in addition to wastewater,” says Stoldt.

Other water recycling plants, like the ones in Orange County and Phoenix, Arizona, only use waste water. Pure Water Monterey will be the first of its kind to use those four different sources of water.

Right next to where the plant will be built in Marina, there is currently a demonstration plant. It’s a small scale version of the future plant which will start producing water for the Monterey Peninsula in 2019.

Mike McCullough gives tours to the public. He works for the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, the other partner in this project.

“We’re just trying to show people what is coming to the area,” says McCullough.

“It’s safe. That’s the thing that we want to show them.”

By the time the water reaches the plant, it has already undergone two levels of treatment. Inside, just past a door that reads “Welcome to the Future Water” visitors can see the next four treatments the water will go through.

There’s ozone. “So the ozone starts breaking down the molecules whether it’s bacteria, organics, things like that into smaller pieces,” says McCullough.

Those smaller pieces are filtered out during the next process called ultrafiltration. Then the water goes through a reverse osmosis. The final step is advanced oxidation.

“It’s kind of a disinfection process. So we add hydrogen peroxide to the water. It mixes with the water and then the water is subjected to a UV light,” says McCullough.

And from here the water will be injected into ground in the Seaside Aquifer. It has to stay there for at least six months before it can be extracted and treated by CalAm, the Monterey Peninsula’s water supplier.

McCullough ends every tour with an offer to drink the water now. He says some people don’t try it. Some have lingering fears about safety. Others can’t get past the ick factor.

By this point in our tour, we've been joined by others who attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the plant on May 5th. That is to say people excited about this project. Dr. Jean Pierre Wolff grabs a cup of water.

"Nice clean water. It's better than bottled water," says Dr. Wolff. I ask if he had any hesitation drinking the water.

"None, none whatsoever. I have an engineering background so I'm total comfortable with this," he says.

Wolff is Chair of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, which approved the permit for the facility.

"We view this project as a very good step forward in providing what I call water security in the total portfolio," says Dr. Wolff.

This project is just part of the portfolio that aims to solve the Monterey Peninsula's water problem, which dates back to the 90s when it became clear CalAm was taking too much water from the Carmel River.

CalAm will buy this water for its Monterey Peninsula customers. It's also moving forward with its proposed desalination plant in Marina.

Dave Stoldt of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District says creating new sources of water is essential for the Monterey Bay Area, which in the context of the state water system, is considered an orphan.

"You know we are not connected to Bay Delta and Sierra Snowmelt or the state water project or the Colorado River, we have to fend for ourselves. You are really down to looking at recycling and desalination," says Stoldt.

To schedule a tour of the demonstration plant, call (831) 658-5652.

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