

The San Diego  
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## Letters to the editor

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### San Diego's thirst for reclaimed water

Many San Diego residents agree that without new supplies of water, the long-term economic health of San Diego is in jeopardy. A difference of opinions can occur when well-meaning decision-makers attempt to determine the most viable solution. And on this front, the decisive factor is almost always the cost of the new water supply.

Unfortunately, the authors of "A safe and reliable source of water for San Diego" (Opinion, July 26) overlooked several important facts and financial realities pertaining to one of those supply options, seawater desalination.

The push toward desalination is being fueled, in part, by public-private partnerships that provide a creative and cost-effective approach to building water infrastructure, and by technological advances in reverse osmosis technology that have resulted in a precipitous drop in the cost of producing desalinated water, while the cost of imported water continues to rise.

The Carlsbad desalination plant proposed by Poseidon Resources would produce 50 million gallons per day of high quality water that exceeds federal drinking water standards. This water would be more reliable and of higher than our imported supplies. Of potentially greater significance, by agreement with the Valley Center Municipal Water District, of which I serve as general manager, and other agencies, the price of water to our consumers would never cost more than the cost of imported water. And unlike the energy crisis earlier this decade, the price of water is locked into place through a long-term contract.

Policy-makers are correct to point out that energy is one of the cost variables associated with the production of desalinated water; however, the same is true for the transportation of imported water – 90 percent of the drinking water in

San Diego County is imported from the Colorado River and Northern California. In fact, the energy cost associated with producing desalinated drinking water locally compared with transporting and treating imported water is financially negligible. Furthermore, in the case of Carlsbad's desalination plant, fluctuations in energy costs are part of the risk assumed by our private sector partner and do not drive the price we pay for the desalinated water.

For all these reasons, the Valley Center Municipal Water District has committed to a water purchase agreement that guarantees us 7,500 acre-feet per year of water from the Carlsbad desalination plant.

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