



\$2 million arrives to start East Napa water pipeline

By JILLIAN JONES Register Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 12:00 am

Efforts to bring reclaimed water to east Napa are picking up speed after the arrival of \$2.25 million in federal stimulus funds.

The North Bay Water Reuse Authority — a multi-regional agency that includes Napa Sanitation District — received \$7.3 million last week for the construction of projects that will expand recycled water use in the region.

Napa County will get between \$2.25 million and \$2.5 million to help supply recycled water to vineyards and other properties in the parched watershed of Milliken, Sarco and Tulocay creeks — commonly referred to by county officials as the MST area in Coombsville.

“It’s a real bright spot in a project that has lingered for years and has just not developed the momentum to go forward,” said Napa County Supervisor Keith Caldwell, whose district includes a portion of the MST.

Caldwell said the award could allow Napa County to start construction on the project within a year, assuming all goes well.

The Napa County Board of Supervisors approved environmental studies last year to build a reclaimed water pipeline to the MST area, where property owners rely solely on a dwindling groundwater supply.

“They’ve been pumping it out faster than it’s been going back in,” said Chuck Weir, program manager for the North Bay Water Reuse Authority. “They’re starting to overtap the groundwater.”

The proposed pipeline would run by Napa State Hospital — where county officials are working with the state to get an easement for a water main — all the way to the Napa Valley Country Club on Hagen Road.

Felix Riesenberg, Napa County deputy director of public works for flood control and water resources, estimates that construction of the pipeline could cost between \$10 million and \$12 million.

Weir predicts that the total price tag, if additional phases of construction are added, could be around \$31 million.

More money is expected from the federal government, potentially including an extra \$6.1 million from Congress next year. However, the maximum contribution the federal government can give is 25 percent of the total project cost, so Napa County will have to find other money, as well.

“We hope to have a local share match,” Caldwell said. “We’ve been working with the larger of the grapegrowers of the Coombsville area who would fund their portion.”

Caldwell said about 25 property owners in the area have agreed to assess themselves for the water, though they haven’t agreed how much yet.

“We don’t know all of those numbers yet,” Caldwell said. “There may still be a gap.”

Caldwell said the county will also look to the state for some money. There is a possibility that the county could help pay for the project, as well.