

Imperial Irrigation District board approves geothermal MOU

David Steffen, Imperial Valley Press, 12-7-09

A proposed 50-megawatt geothermal plant in the Valley moved one step forward Monday when the Imperial Irrigation District Board of Directors approved implementing initial feasibility studies.

The board voted unanimously to approve a memorandum of understanding that would provide \$3.51 million and 2,280 acres for geothermal research in the Imperial Valley.

“It helps us get our foot in the door to be able to obtain geothermal energy that can be used for our own ratepayers at a very reasonable price,” IID Director John Pierre Menvielle said.

The IID is a member of the Southern California Public Power Authority. The IID has worked with partner SCPPA members, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Burbank, Pasadena, Colton and Glendale.

If research yields positive results, the 50-megawatt plant would be built near Niland. Researchers must determine if there is sufficient underground heat in the proposed area. IID has committed 2,280 acres and LADWP has committed 2,950 acres. Research would involve drilling to determine underground heat temperatures, among other factors.

IID Director Michael Abatti said geothermal power would help meet state renewable energy requirements by 2020.

“This will help meet some of those mandates by 2020, and at the same time, it helps us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels,” Abatti said.

The IID board was first presented with the memorandum of understanding in September, according to the IID board agenda.

The current MOU allows SCPPA parties to end property leases and return rent for them if they cannot agree on a public or public-private structure, the agenda stated.

IID President Jim Hanks said geothermal energy would help meet state emissions mandates.

“This would help us meet our renewable requirements, and it’s probably the cheapest renewable resource that we can go,” Hanks said.

Abatti said a potential geothermal plant would boost the Valley’s economy and energy production.

“We’re all eager to explore, and I’m sure it’ll work out,” Abatti said. “There will be some twists and turns, but we’ll work through it, and it’ll be a beneficial project to all.”