

IID votes 5-0 for geothermal water

David Steffen, Imperial Valley Press, 1-21-10

The CHAR geothermal plant project received approval from the Imperial Irrigation District Board of Directors to purchase 800 acre-feet of water annually, at Wednesday's special meeting.

The Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve the purchase.

CHAR is comprised of the firms Catalyst Renewables and Hannon Armstrong.

CHAR, which will develop the Hudson Ranch 1 geothermal plant, is the first recipient of IID's interim water supply policy. CHAR is now authorized to purchase up to 800 acre-feet of water annually from IID for 30 years. The interim water supply policy provides 25,000 acre-feet of water for purchase annually for nonagricultural uses.

Dave Watson, managing director of CHAR and Hudson Ranch 1, said approval of the water purchase was required to begin financing and construction of the project.

"It's a great relief to be done with it, but I also think it was a very productive process," he said.

IID Director Stella Mendoza said she thought it was important to provide water to all users in the district.

"I've always felt the water here in the Imperial Valley belongs to all the people," Mendoza said. "I think the agricultural community and business community and industrial community can all work and coexist side by side."

Director Michael Abatti said he voted in favor of the project's request because the integrated water resources management plan ensures sound distribution of the water.

"I think this is the right way to do things and the right way with no net impact to existing users, so I'm supportive of this project," he said.

The Hudson Ranch 1 site is located near Niland and the Salton Sea. Work will likely begin in March, and the plant would begin functioning in about two years. Director John Pierre Menvielle said it will be a plus once the plant begins production.

"It's been a long time coming, and I appreciate the fact staff and CHAR got together and got this thing worked out," Menvielle said. "The sooner we get the plant built, the better for everybody."