

Mount Shasta Herald

News

Nestlé scoping meeting draws citizen interest

By Deborra Clayton
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The Notice of Preparation regarding the CEQA Environmental Impact Report and the NEPA Environmental Analysis for the proposed Nestlé Waters NA water bottling facility in McCloud opened its pages for public input at a scoping meeting Monday in Scout Hall.

Pacific Municipal Consultant project manager Mark Teague introduced his project team, described the EIR/EA process, summarized the proposed project, outlined the scope of the environmental analysis and offered an opportunity for the public to comment.

"We need to know your concerns about this proposed project. We think we know what needs to be studied but we want to hear from you," Teague told the assembled crowd.

Holly Keeler, PMC's CEQA/NEPA expert, said the team had already gone through a standard checklist to see what environmental analysis would apply to this particular proposed project. This provided the original scope on which the NOP was based.

"But the NOP is open for public comment because the people in the community know more about what's going on in their area than consultants from out of the area do. This is our way of seeing if we've included everything. Throughout the process other things may come up, but this public comment period gives us a starting point so our consultants can get to work," she said.

The public may continue to submit written comments and concerns to the Siskiyou County Planning Department, the lead agency for the proposed project, until 5:00 p.m. on November 15th. The county will forward the comments to PMC.

Teague and the PMC team will use all the comments received by that date in determining the full scope of their environmental review.

According to Teague, Monday's scoping meeting format was designed to allow

maximum contact between the public and the team of experts who will soon begin examining the proposed project in light of their various areas of expertise.

Those attending were invited to submit their concerns and comments in one or more of several ways.

People could speak individually with the team members responsible for analyzing the project aspect to which their particular concern pertained. Such aspects included traffic, biological, noise and air quality impacts, as well as historical architecture, utilities and mapping.

Comments pertaining to other aspects of the environmental review, such as non architectural cultural resources, land use, public utilities, jobs, housing and the NEPA documentation, were welcomed as well.

PMC staff was also available to answer questions and receive comments.

A court reporter was available in a separate room to record the comments of those who wished for more privacy.

Forms were available for people who wanted time to study the NOP proposed project description or simply gather their thoughts before writing their comments and mailing them to the county.

"This is a very encouraging turn-out," commented Siskiyou County planning director Wayne Virag, "and I think people are receptive to the format of the meeting. It allows a bit more freedom and is less intimidating than speaking into a microphone in front of fifty people."

Teague said it is very unusual for him to assemble his entire staff for a public scoping meeting.

"This is an important project in the community and I felt it was important for people to be able to ask specific questions of appropriate team members," he said.

Jim Cook, candidate for county supervisor from district 1, said it was great to see so many people participating in the scoping meeting process.

"It's good to be here," he said. "I think it's critical for supervisors and future supervisors to attend meetings like this."

Cook said he would be submitting a comment asking about the effect of the project on local hydrogeology.

Lifelong McCloud resident Alice DeBon said her concern with Nestlé was that they would be able to drill bore holes.

"We live at the foot of a dormant volcano. If they hit a lava tube we could lose our aquifer," she said.

Dawn Snure, also of McCloud, said she would like the team to consider the level of noise that would be generated by the plant relative to the noise that used to come from mill operations.

"We had to put up with a very high level of noise before. I'd like them to compare and make sure the noise levels will be lower," she said.

Diane Lowe's concern is for the old growth forest in which the historical springhouse at Intake Springs is located.

"Currently all the spring water at this spring is being captured in the MCSD pipe. I'm concerned about how Nestlé will modify our pipes there at the spring to get the water. Don't tell me they're thinking about a bore hole in this precious, naturally preserved environment," Lowe said.

Bob Wieder, also of McCloud, said he is 100 per cent positively in favor of the Nestlé project.

"One thing I'm concerned about, though, is when the trucks leave the mill site and come onto Hwy 89, traffic heading west will definitely be affected. If there isn't an additional pull-out lane all the way to Snowman Hill, there's going to be some backed up traffic," he said.

Nestlé Waters NA natural resource manager Dave Palais said he was very happy to see the large turnout for the meeting and glad to see people expressing their interest and concerns.

"This is what the process is meant to allow. The process works," said Palais.

When the NOP comment period ends November 15th, technical studies will begin.

When those analyses are completed, a draft EIR/EA will be produced. The public will be able to review and comment on the contents of the draft document during a 45 day public comment period.

The final EIR/EA will include a written response to every comment on the draft document received during this 45 day period and will be sent to the county for consideration.

Teague explained that although the timeline for such a process is necessarily flexible, his team is aiming for completion of the draft EIR/EA by January or February 2005 and completion of the final EIR/EA by March or April 2005.

Comments, whether sent before the November 15th NOP deadline or at any other time throughout the review process, can be mailed to Siskiyou County Planning Department, Wayne Virag, Planning Director, P.O.Box 1085, Yreka, CA 96097.