



MARINA COAST WATER DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helicopter to make low-level flights over Northern Salinas Valley

Beginning May 14, 2017, residents of Marina, Neponset, Castroville, Moss Landing, Blanco, and Salinas, may see a low-flying helicopter towing a large hexagonal frame. This unique equipment is part of a project to map groundwater aquifers and subsurface geology in the area.

Lasting up to 5 days (unless delayed by weather), instruments mounted below the helicopter will collect and record measurements to learn more about buried sand and gravel aquifers. Marina Coast Water District, working with Aqua Geo Frameworks and researchers from Stanford's Department of Geophysics have planned the flights to improve understanding of the available groundwater resources. This technology allows for more complete data acquisition from the air, upwards of 50 to 75 miles per hour, with exploration depths down to at least 900 feet below the land surface. Aqua Geo Frameworks and Stanford researchers will process the data and information, and produce a final report.

The Marina Coast Water District has commissioned this study to better understand and manage the groundwater basins that supply its customers. The data generated from the study will provide a far more comprehensive and clear understanding of the degree to which sea water has or hasn't intruded into basins allowing the District to manage its resources based on the best available scientific data. It is expected the study will fill key gaps in data, provide a far more accurate picture of the quality of the groundwater, and prepare the District with the necessary information to include in a Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Since data can only be collected over open spaces, no data collection will occur over residential areas or other buildings.

Sinton Helicopters, based out of Paso Robles, California, will oversee the flights. The helicopter will fly lines over a flight path designed to get the best available data from the subsurface. Scientific equipment, towed about 100 feet above the ground surface, hangs about 100 feet below the helicopter in a 'spider web' array and is designed to map geologic structures beneath the ground. The helicopter will be manned by very experienced pilots who are specially trained for low-level flying with this equipment. The helicopter company operates under FAA unlimited part 135 unscheduled air-taxi operations, part 133 a,b,c and d external loads, and part 137 agriculture dispersal.

MCWD provides high quality water, waste water and recycled water services to more than 30,000 customers in the Monterey Peninsula communities of the City of Marina and the Ord Community through management, conservation, and development of future sources while at reasonable costs. The District is governed by a five-member board of directors who are elected by voters.

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Editor: In the public interest and in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations, Marina Coast Water District is announcing this low-level airborne project. Your assistance in publicizing this information is appreciated.