



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

NEWS RELEASE

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**SACRAMENTO COUNTY GRAND JURY ASKS:
CAN THE DEL PASO MANOR WATER DISTRICT BE SAVED?**

There are more than 100 special districts in Sacramento County, with a staggering 3,400 spread across the state. From local water and sanitation services to lesser known entities like cemetery districts, each operates under individualized budgets and authorities. While some work well and have a large revenue support base, many others struggle to provide essential resources.

It is this second scenario which confronts the Del Paso Manor Water District (DPMWD), a one-square mile area sitting at the intersection of Watt and El Camino Avenues. A recent investigation by the Sacramento County Grand Jury into the District's operational and management practices resulted in a blistering report calling water district officials, "reckless and irresponsible." That report shares the grim news that aging infrastructure and other health and safety repair measures could cost each water district household a whopping \$18,500 or more. And, the Grand Jury believes this situation may not be unique.

Now, the Grand Jury has completed an update of its report, concluding that the DPMWD has taken some remedial steps. From better public transparency in conducting its business to agreeing to work with the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission, the troubled water district is being recognized for its response to some of the Jury's recommendations.

But troubling and expensive questions remain. What is the total price tag for short, mid and long-term fixes? How long will it take the water district to make a full and accurate determination of its needs, while vital wells and pipelines continue to crumble? And dauntingly, how will just 1,800 ratepayers fund tens of millions of dollars in repairs and upgrades? A voter-approved rate hike of any significance is unlikely in the near-term, and grant possibilities often come with many strings attached.

As advocates for the County's residents, jurors want their investigation to shed light on the dilemma confronting the DPMWD, and special districts generally. "The Grand Jury can continue to conduct investigations like this for the foreseeable future," Grand Jury Foreperson Deanna Hanson explains, "Or, government leaders can stop shielding themselves behind the special district designation and step up."

"It's a sort of 'not my problem' environment," says Hanson. She points out that when asked to respond to the Grand Jury's initial investigation, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, California State Water Resources Control Board and others hid behind their lack of legal jurisdiction.

The full investigation, as well as the updated report, and the official responses are available to the public on the Grand Jury website: www.saccourt.ca.gov.