

AVEK Water to Boost Supply For Quartz Hill County District

Quartz Hill County Water District is another local water system that is looking forward to receiving State Project water through the proposed distribution system of the Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency.

The purpose of AVEK is to "wholesale" supplemental water to existing and future "retail" water purveyors, in order to relieve the present serious overdraft on local groundwater supplies.

Water companies and districts now providing water to over 90 per cent of the population of this area have signed contracts to buy water from the AVEK system, if voters approve sale of bonds to finance the system at an election on February 16, 1971.

The accompanying article gives a history of Quartz Hill County Water District, the problems its leaders

foresee in meeting future water demands, and why the District feels the construction of the AVEK system will be of benefit to its customers and taxpayers.

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Quartz Hill County Water District is a good case study of how resourceful people can make a first-class water system out of an odd lot of rusty pipes.

Now serving nearly 1800 homes and businesses southwest of Lancaster, the Quartz Hill County Water District was created in 1954 by purchasing and combining several small water systems that couldn't handle the growing water demands in the area.

When the new District took over the job of tying a lot of aged and inadequate water mains into a functioning system, there were only 500 structures in the area requiring water service, ac-

cording to District Manager Herb Spitzer.

Since then, the system has been totally rebuilt, along with the addition of a 750,000-gallon storage tank. The job has been done so well that Quartz Hill homes now enjoy the same favorable fire insurance rates as in Lancaster, which are a great deal lower than Quartz Hill's rates were before the District came along.

This impressive feat has resulted from hard work by many people, plus the expenditure of some \$1,045,000 in bond funds. At the same time, water "hook-ups" in the District have increased nearly three times.

Credit for the present high state of the Quartz Hill system should go to the people who live there. He points out that they have gone to the polls twice to authorize large expenditures (and tax increases for themselves) to assure the future of the area.

One factor that has made it especially impressive that an efficient water system could be developed in Quartz Hill County Water District has been its large area in relation to people.

The locality is still semi-rural, with large lots and open acreage.

While this type of development has made Quartz Hill a desirable place to live, it has made necessary a lot more water pipe per house, than would be necessary in a conventional suburban community.

The District now has more than 30 miles of water pipe in various types and sizes in its system.

The fact that Quartz Hill has overcome so many obstacles to become one of the better water systems in this part of California does not necessarily signal that the District's problems are over, Spitzer emphasizes. He says the one word "growth" pretty well embodies both the fears and aspirations of the District.

On the good side, he says past growth has made it possible for the District to reduce its tax rate by 50 per cent since 1962, with more reductions expected. Growth brings a larger tax base, he explains, which allows a lower individual tax rate to meet the District's bonded indebtedness. Also, more houses make for greater usage of the sys-

tem, which also tends to reduce operating costs.

He says the existing system is designed to handle future growth, as evidenced by a new 1,500,000-gallon storage tank which is expected to go into operation early this summer. He says they will need the big tank, because the District expects an 18 per cent increase in hook-ups during the coming year.

But growth demands also pose a problem for Quartz Hill, because of the massive overdraft of groundwater now occurring throughout the Antelope Valley-East Kern area. In simple terms, he says, Quartz Hill has a large enough system for the future but not enough water to put in it, unless supplemental water is provided.

Spitzer sees use of the State Project water through the proposed AVEK distribution system as the only answer to the long-range water supply problem for Quartz Hill.

He says water from the AVEK system will actually be cheaper than water the District is now purchasing from another nearby water system. He explains that drilling more wells won't solve the problem, because the additional wells "would only steal water from each other."

Quartz Hill is in a particularly unfavorable situation with respect to groundwater supplies.

Being on the "rim" of the groundwater basin, the water level in wells there has been dropping an average of six feet a year.

With increased pumping necessary to meet growing demands, he expects the groundwater table to drop even faster in the future.

This will not only increase water costs, he says, but could "dry-up" many of their wells because of the limited capacity of the groundwater basin in that locality.

Today, the Quartz Hill District is operated with only three employees. Besides Spitzer, Mrs. George Schmitt serves as secretary-auditor. Fred Wagner is service man. All three employees have been with the District more than ten years. Mrs. Schmitt, known to nearly everyone in Quartz Hill as "Rhea", is now in her sixteenth year with the District.

Spitzer says he's surprised at how many Quartz Hill residents don't know that their water system is publicly owned.

"This is not a profit-making firm," he frequently has to explain. "All the money the District receives goes to operate and improve the system."

The Quartz Hill County Water District is governed by a board of directors elected by the people served by the District. Present board members are Olan M. Flick, Alvis J. Beams, Orville B. Rowelett, Colus L. White and Michael F. Risolo, Jr.

In order to cut operating expenses to the bone, the District sends bills every two months to most of its customers. While this has proven economical, he also points out it causes some people to think they are

paying an exorbitant water rate because they fail to notice the bill covers service for 60 days.

"Water is not expensive in Quartz Hill, as compared with other systems in the area", Spitzer says. "On the average, the monthly water charge here is within a dollar of charges in other systems that have a lot more favorable water conditions."

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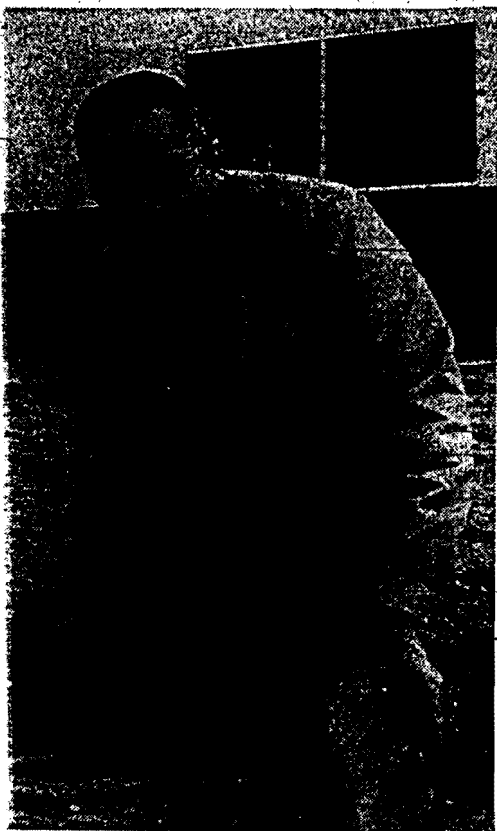


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NEW METER — Herb Spitzer, manager of Quartz Hill County Water District, checks another of the growing number of new water meter installations in the area. The Quartz Hill district is expecting to meet future water needs from the State Project through the proposed AVEK system.

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Thank goodness

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