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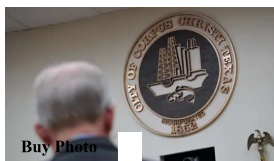
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# Company looking to bring seawater desalination to Corpus Christi

**Tim Acosta**, Corpus Christi Caller Times Published 8:00 a.m. CT Aug. 17, 2018 | Updated 9:15 a.m. CT Aug. 18, 2018



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**Editor's Note: Seven Seas Water Corp. is based in Florida. An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated from where the company was based.**

A private company is looking to take the city of Corpus Christi's seawater desalination plant talks from a drip into a flood of activity.

(Photo: Tim Acosta/Caller-Times)

Seven Seas Water Corp., a Florida-based company, has submitted a preliminary proposal to city officials to build a facility on Harbor Island on land leased from the Ed Rachal Foundation. The company would finance, design, build and own the seawater desalination plant, which would be used to sell potable water to the City of Corpus Christi via a pipeline that would run from Harbor Island to Aransas Pass.

The pipeline would also have a connection into the San Patricio Municipal Water District's distribution system. Doug Brown, CEO of Seven Seas, said the company entered into its lease with the Ed Rachal Foundation for about 10 acres of land about a year ago, after eliminating possible sites on the south side of Corpus Christi (too cost prohibitive) and the La Quinta Junction in the Corpus Christi Ship Channel (environmental concerns).

"The major benefit that you get with seawater desalination is it's a drought-proof water supply, and the Coastal Bend area certainly has some not-too-good experience dealing with droughts, and what that can do to the local community and the local economy," Brown said.

Seven Seas' proposal, a copy of which was obtained by the Caller-Times, states the desalination facility would produce 10 million gallons per day initially, upon completion. The idea is to provide municipal grade water into the San Patricio Municipal Water District's distribution system, which would free up water the city of Corpus Christi supplies to the district.

Seven Seas officials said one of the main benefits of their project would be that the estimated \$150 million desalination plant would be constructed without the use of taxpayer or utility-rate customer dollars. Paul Altheide, with the Ed Rachal Foundation, on Thursday said the lease entered into on Sept. 1, 2017 provides Seven Seas Water with easements for intake and discharge points.

"This is a project that we would take on at no cost to the taxpayers," Brown said. "We know that the area's water demand has been going up and continues to go up, and if you want to provide a reliable water supply that would encourage additional industrial development, you really need to start looking forward at not just 'What do I need today?' but 'What am I going to need three years and five years from now?'"

The freed up water could be allocated to existing residential customers or conserved, according to the proposal. There were also several options for financing and construction of the pipeline and storage tanks the facility would require. Those include the company adding the cost of those parts into the sale price of the water it sells, or the city/third party designing or building the pipeline and tanks.

Several years ago, drought conditions led to a mandatory 10 percent reduction in water usage by local industry, which could have a negative effect on those businesses if history were to repeat itself.

**More:** [Corpus Christi to study whether desalination plant is a pipe dream or reality \(/story/news/local/2018/05/24/corpus-christi-study-whether-desalination-pipe-dream-reality/635261002/\)](https://www.caller.com/story/news/local/2018/05/24/corpus-christi-study-whether-desalination-pipe-dream-reality/635261002/)

**More:** [With industry's growth in Corpus Christi, city looks to increase its water supply \(/story/news/local/2018/07/25/industrial-growth-means-corpus-christi-water-supply-must-increase/827414002/\)](https://www.caller.com/story/news/local/2018/07/25/industrial-growth-means-corpus-christi-water-supply-must-increase/827414002/)

"This not only adversely affects industry — most can operate only at 100% or 0% — but also has a negative impact upon the Coastal Bend's ability to attract new industrial development," Seven Seas' proposal stated.

That concern has been echoed by the Port of Corpus Christi and city officials. The port has applied for a pair of permits with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for two possible sites, at the La Quinta Junction along the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and on Harbor Island in Port Aransas.

The Harbor Island property the port owns and is proposing as a site for a desalination plant is different from the land Seven Seas has leased from the Ed Rachal Foundation for that same purpose. Port officials have said they are only applying for the permits in order to clear the lengthy review process so that in the event Corpus Christi or another entity wants to build a desalination plant, that process is already done.

Port officials have made it clear they have no interest in owning or operating a desalination plant, but want to help move the process along as quickly as possible. The city of Corpus Christi is also in the midst of a feasibility study to determine, in part, possible sites and costs associated with seawater desalination facilities.

The city put out a request for information on Wednesday from companies for possible alternative water supplies. Those would include everything from aquifer storage and recovery to desalination plants, according to a copy of the RFI provided by city officials on Thursday.

Brown said Seven Seas would submit a more detailed proposal for its seawater desalination facility that would be in line with the RFI in the next couple of weeks. The deadline for interested companies to submit official responses to the RFI is Oct. 12.

"We need to prepare a specific response to that RFI," Brown said.

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Sean Strawbridge, CEO for the Port of Corpus Christi, addresses members of the Port Aransas City Council on July 19, 2018. (Photo: Tim Acosta/Caller-Times)

Port CEO Sean Strawbridge said he was aware of Seven Seas' proposal, but said the flurry of activity that has gone on in the past few months regarding desalination is an increasing "arms race to secure uninterrupted water" for local industry and residents. He did express concern about what oversight there would be on Seven Seas' project, which would be on private property.

**More:** [Tide of opposition forms to Port of Corpus Christi's desalination plans \(/story/news/local/2018/07/20/tide-opposition-forms-port-corpus-christi-desalination-plans/806877002/\)](/story/news/local/2018/07/20/tide-opposition-forms-port-corpus-christi-desalination-plans/806877002/)

**More:** [Bech Bruun to work with Port of Corpus Christi on desalination, water issues \(/story/news/local/2018/06/19/bech-bruun-work-port-corpus-christi-desal-water-issues-consultant-desalination/714644002/\)](/story/news/local/2018/06/19/bech-bruun-work-port-corpus-christi-desal-water-issues-consultant-desalination/714644002/)

**More:** [TCEQ: Port of Corpus Christi seeking permit for desalination plant \(/story/news/local/2018/05/14/tceq-port-corpus-christi-looking-construct-desalination-plant-texas/607694002/\)](/story/news/local/2018/05/14/tceq-port-corpus-christi-looking-construct-desalination-plant-texas/607694002/)

"Thus the reason the port felt compelled to secure a desalination permit — so we and the city would have some oversight and say in the process on behalf of the community," Strawbridge said.

"We need water, so the expanded interest is a welcome sign that industry can bring a solution to the table," he added. "But it must not negatively impact the balanced ecology of the bays and estuaries system we rely upon for our livelihoods and to enjoy our recreation."

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Corpus Christi Mayor Joe McComb on Thursday said he was not aware of Seven Seas' proposal, but added that "all options are on the table" when it comes to finding new water supplies for residents and local industry. But McComb said the council would wait to see the results of the feasibility study before making a decision on how best to move forward, adding they "were absolutely not in a position to do that" right now.

The city currently serves about 500,000 customers in Corpus Christi and other parts of the Coastal Bend through its water distribution system, officials said.

"I think there is a lot of interest in securing a permanent, uninterruptible water supply for the city of Corpus Christi and our customers — there's no question about that," McComb said. "And we're moving as fast as we can, as prudently as we can, to make sure that the decision is the right decision in terms of location, in terms of volume and in terms of timing."

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