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1

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1

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Proposal for Harbor Island desalination plant taking shape

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Plans for the area’s first seawater desalination plant are heating up.

Seven Seas Water, a private company based in Tampa, confirmed Friday that it has a proposal in the works to build a desalination plant and wants to partner with the City of Corpus Christi to do that.

“Whatever the solution is, it has to be one that the city embraces,” said Doug Brown, CEO for Seven Seas Water.

In the coming weeks, Seven Seas Water will send a detailed plan to the city of Corpus Christi in response to a request by the city on Wednesday for information from interested parties about alternative water supplies.

“We’ve been studying the situation and feel seawater desalination is the best answer,” Brown said. “It’s a drought-proof water supply and it can be used to supplement the other water supplies that already exist.”

Seven Seas wants to put the plant on Harbor Island where its leasing land from the Ed Rachel Foundation, according to a preliminary proposal obtained by KRIS 6 News.

It’s the second desalination plant proposal for the island. The Port of Corpus Christi has requested permits to also build on Harbor Island on land it owns.

The initial water supply of the plant would be about 10 million gallons per day, which is about 10 percent of the total industrial demand, according to the Seven Seas proposal. The company will finance, design, build and operate the desalination plant and sell the water to the city through a pipeline that also connects with the San Patricio Water District distribution system, the proposal stated.

At this point, it's a multi-year process, Brown said. The next step is to work with city officials and if those talks are successful, the company would need to go through a lengthy environmental permitting process.

In recent years, area leaders have pushed to make desalination a reality in the Coastal Bend. It's considered a drought-proof water supply for the area's growing oil-based economy. The oil industry is a big water user. About 40 percent of Corpus Christi's water demand comes from industry.

As for Harbor Island, it's the third such industrial project proposed there in recent months. The Port of Corpus Christi has plans to build a crude oil storage terminal on the island. That permit is pending.

Many residents in the Port Aransas area have voiced recent concerns that those projects could destroy the eco-system and worry about how encroaching industry would affect the tourism-based economy.

"Our plan is to work closely with the UT Marine Science Institute, Harte Research Institute, the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries as the company gets into the permitting process.

Seven Seas favored Harbor Island over a location on Corpus Christi's southside and the La Quinta Channel because of the island's access and minimal impact on the environment, Brown said.

The company has built seawater desalination plants on islands in the Caribbean, he added.



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