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Weekend Report

Saturday, July 8 and Sunday, July 9, 2006

General Electric pulls plug on desalination plant bid in Hadera, Israel
Corporate giant General Electric withdrew yesterday from the contest to build a major desalination plant in Hadera, just hours before the tender deadline expired. The decision was a blow to the Finance and Infrastructure Ministries, as it leaves just two contestants. GE had been considered a strong contender, possibly the strongest. Of the remaining contenders, one consortium includes a partnership between IDE Technologies and Housing and Construction (Shikun U'Binui). The other consortium pairs Israeli companies Granite Hacarmel Investments, Tahal Consulting and Ocif Investment and Development with Spanish firms Inima and Aquila. *Haaretz_ 7/7/06*

U.S.-Mexico border fight focuses on Colorado River water, not immigration
The ties that bind Calexico in the U.S. and Mexicali, south of the border, are being tested as a 20-year dispute over the rights to water leaking into Mexico from a canal on the American side is reaching a peak. To slake the ever-growing thirst of San Diego, 100 miles to the west, the United States has a plan to replace a 23-mile segment of the earthen All-American Canal, which the federal government owns and the Colorado River feeds, with a concrete-lined parallel trough. The $225 million project would send more water to San Diego, by cutting off billions of leaked gallons — enough for 112,000 households a year — that have helped irrigate Mexican farms since the 1940's. But Mexican farmers and their advocates say the lined canal would effectively turn off the spigot for 25,000 people, including 400 farmers whose wells rely on the seepage that has helped turn the powdery fields east of Mexicali, an industrial city, into one of the biggest Mexican producers of onions, alfalfa, asparagus, squash and other crops. The farmers and their families ask what will they do if they cannot till the fields and answer that they will cross the border, illegally if they have to, in droves. *New York Times_ 7/7/06 (logon required)*

Lack of clean drinking water on Alberta Native American reserves raises ire
Contaminated drinking water on Alberta reserves is to blame for sickness and possibly even deaths, a federal review panel was told Thursday. A water supply official for the Saddle Lake First Nation, one of Canada's largest reserves with more than 7,000 residents, gave a grim outline of foul water and sick residents during his presentation to the expert panel. "We've got death at the tap," said Tony Stienhaurer, who says the reserve has also been under a boil water order since 2004. "We've got a high incidence rate of cancers, diabetes and young children that are born with cancer. Water has done an enormous disaster in Saddle Lake."
The reserve is now using a temporary water filtration system that provides some residents with drinking water, but many people don't have cars and have to walk several kilometres to retrieve the water, he said. *Globeandmail.com_7/6/06*

Desalination
Middle East Desalination Research Center to tackle water desalination research
The Oman-based centre is preparing to conduct research for the first time since it was set up in late 1996. Until now, the centre has only funded and managed research projects in the region, but from next year it will begin its own research programmes in laboratories currently under construction in the capital Muscat. Its director Koussai Quteishat says that Lebanon and Syria are the only two countries in the Middle East

with adequate water supplies according to the United Nations' definition of levels 'critical for development'. *SciDev.net_ 7/7/06*

Environment

EPA fines Nogales, Ariz. for Safe Drinking Water violations

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently resolved the city of Nogales's long-standing drinking water violations regarding its failure to comply with a March 2004 EPA administrative order requiring submittal of drinking water monitoring and reporting data. The city of Nogales will pay a $5,500 fine and spend at least $50,000 to repair or replace sewer lines in an area of Nogales commonly referred to as the "old city," where sewer lines have degraded and are leaking wastewater into the surrounding soil and possibly into groundwater supplies. The city failed to meet a March EPA 2005 deadline requiring the municipality to monitor and report chemicals detected in its drinking water. The EPA uses the data to evaluate the need for new drinking water standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act. *Newsblaze_7/6/06*

EPA to infuse almost $1 billion into U.S. drinking water programs

States, territories and tribes will share more than $940 million from three EPA grant programs to support the quality and security of the nation's drinking water. The water supplies for more than 270 million people will benefit from the funding. More than $837 million will support Drinking Water State Revolving Funds programs, which help states, territories and tribes finance infrastructure improvements to public water systems. Since the program began in 1997, public water systems have received more than $9 billion in low-interest loans. Concurrently, the agency has proposed allotting $841,500,000 in the proposed FY 2007 budget. *Press Release_ 7/5/06*

Regional Issues

Atlanta eyes Savannah River as water source

Recent indications that Atlanta is eyeing the Savannah River lend new urgency to South Carolina's talks with Georgia over the use of the Lowcountry's primary source for drinking water. Atlanta long has denied its interest in the river that forms the Georgia-South Carolina border. But with the booming city's main source of drinking water, the Chattahoochee River, caught in a tri-state legal war, city officials have begun discussing the possibility of building a pipeline from the Savannah River to Atlanta, at least in the long term. The river isn't in danger of running dry. But Atlanta's potential interest in its water means South Carolina should push now for a formal agreement with Georgia that would guarantee South Carolina rights to about half of the river's water, Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority general manager Dean Moss said Monday. "The idea is to get this deal done now before Atlanta overtly claims the river," said Moss, who is part of the six-person team representing South Carolina in the ongoing talks. "That way, their fight is between Atlanta, Augusta and Savannah, and not us." *Islandpacket.com_7/5/06*

Research and Technology

NASA satellites find balance in South America's water cycle

For the first time, NASA scientists using space-based measurements have directly monitored and measured the complete cycle of water movement for an entire continent. Using satellite data from three Earth-orbiting NASA missions -- Quick Scatterometer (QuikScat), Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (Grace), and Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) -- a science team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., directly observed the seasonal cycling of water into and out of South America. Their research confirmed that the amount of water as rain or snow flowing into the continent from the marine atmosphere is in balance with the estimated amount of water returned to the ocean by the continent's rivers. The findings are significant because until now there had been no direct way to monitor continental water balance. Scientists had been estimating the balance through regional ground-based measurements and computer models. The findings are published in Geophysical Research Letters. *AScribe_7/5/06*

Texas A&M research to assist national urban water demand planning

As predicting future urban water use becomes more complex, a Texas Agricultural Experiment Station study could help lessen the burden facing city planners nationwide. A federal grant from the U.S. Geological Survey will help fund the research, which is anticipated to reveal new trends and opportunities in water use. Findings will be used to improve planning models, said Dr. Ron Griffin, Experiment Station economist. The results will help provide a better understanding of what drives water use in urban environments. Water rates, meter charges and other use data will

be collected from several hundred cities, helping to reveal what is expected to be a "diversity of water rates across the nation." *AgNews_7/5/06*

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