

## Valle Escondido seeks water rights to handle growth

By J.R. Logan

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The Valle Escondido Homeowner's Association hopes to transfer water rights from an acequia up Taos Canyon to be used on wells that serve residents in the subdivision.

An application filed with the state Office of the State Engineer in September proposes to transfer 4.88 acre-feet of consumptive acequia water rights from the Manuel Quintana Ditch No. 2, which diverts from Tienditas Creek.

According to the application, the water rights would be used to supply water to future residents in the subdivision through an existing water system.

Dix Stillman with the homeowner's association board said the association currently serves about 145 households with its existing 31 acre-feet of water rights. But much of the subdivision — as many as 250 additional lots — remains undeveloped, Stillman said, meaning it will need more water rights to serve new residents. Plus, Stillman said many part-time residents soon expect to move to Valle Escondido full time, and demand for water is expected to increase.

Mary Humphrey, the association's attorney, said the water rights are tied to a farm just south of the subdivision, in the immediate watershed.

Humphrey said it makes sense to increase the capacity of the existing water system so that future residents don't start drilling private wells in the valley."

Stillman said the water rights were sold by Roy Cunningham. The land currently irrigated with the acequia water rights belongs to the Manuel Quintana Estate, according to the transfer application.

In addition to serving homes, the association also provides water for the Valle Escondido Golf Course. Stillman said the amount of water that can be used on the golf course is restricted by court order to 1.5 acre-feet a year, and none of the new water rights would be used for the course.

Stillman said there was a period when the association's water use exceeded its water rights, but he said conservation measures have brought usage within that limit.

For information about the application, contact the Office of the State Engineer at (505) 827-6175.

