

NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public
Outreach**

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Associated Press

DAM DISASTER

People gather Thursday in front of the broken banks of the Patel dam in the Rift Valley. The dam burst, killing at least 44 people — including 20 children — and forcing hundreds from their homes. Villagers said it started with a loud rumble, then houses collapsed under an approaching wall of water. “We took our children and rushed to higher ground,” said farmer Joseph Maina. Their home was submerged, but they survived. It was the deadliest incident in the seasonal rains that have killed more than 170 since March. .

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

Los Angeles Times

Brown stresses support needed for water tunnel project

*Kathleen Ronayne ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 5/11/2018*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Fresh off recent victories securing billions of dollars in financing for his ambitious plan to reroute California’s water system, Gov. Jerry Brown offered a genial yet urgent reminder Thursday of the need to set the project on stable footing before he leaves office next year.

Although its financing is shaping up, the project still faces hurdles including securing more state permits and battling a constant spate of lawsuits from environmental groups who worry the project will harm fish ecosystems.

“If it doesn’t happen now, forget it – you will all be dead before it’s even thought of again,” Brown said in remarks to a conference of the state’s public water agencies. “I know because things come and go, and there’s a moment.”

Brown’s comments offered a rare moment of reflection for a governor who eschews the notion of a legacy at every turn. Brown, 80, leaves office in January after four terms as California governor, the first two from 1975-1983. His brief remarks were filled with references to California’s long quest to better transport water from north to south, a key focus during the governorship of his father, Pat Brown.

Brown’s father oversaw construction of a massive state water project in the 1950s and 1960s, the north-south delivery system that has grown outdated as the state’s population has ballooned.

Jerry Brown’s ambitious plan to build two 35-mile-long tunnels to divert water from the water-rich north to the drier south won a game-changing boost last month when a large Southern California water district voted to spend \$11 billion on the project.

The backing from the Metropolitan Water District breathed new life into the \$17 billion twin-tunnel plan, which had seemed all but dead.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District approved \$650 million this week, and more votes are scheduled from the local water districts that are expected to finance the project. When completed, it would divert fresh water from the Sacramento River to the Central Valley and Southern California.

Brown vowed to spend his final eight months in office fighting to obtain the permits needed, including from the State Water Resources Control Board he oversees and the Delta Stewardship Council.

Glen Peterson to retire from LVMWD

By The Acorn Staff | on May 09, 2018



Peterson

After serving on the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board of directors for over 30 years and on the Metropolitan Water District more than 25, Glen Peterson announced he will retire at the end of the year.

The 68-year-old Peterson became a leading expert on water issues in his three decades with water district.

“Glen came to the LVMWD board to serve his community, but that service turned into something that became much larger and more significant than the daily operations of a local water agency,” said Dave Pedersen, the Las Virgenes general manager.

A real estate agent earlier in his career, Peterson became a board member with the Agoura Las Virgenes Chamber of Commerce and a chief petitioner for the Agoura Hills cityhood initiative. He helped gather enough signatures to put the initiative on the ballot, which resulted in the city’s 1982 incorporation.

Peterson moved on from the chamber board and became president of Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation. He also managed the Peter Strauss Ranch for five years, which later became the Mountains Conservancy Foundation.

He was instrumental in the development of the Santa Monica National Recreation Area by lobbying for, and obtaining, funding for the area.

Former water board director Hal Helsley encouraged Peterson to run for a position on the Las Virgenes panel in 1987.

In 1993, Peterson was chosen to be the local representative on the Metropolitan board.

One of his first initiatives as a Met member was the introduction of fluoride into the Southern California water supply. He began by talking with the California State Department of Health and the Los Angeles Department of Health, where he was able to create a coalition with the Centers for Disease Control. Met, which provides drinking water to Las Virgenes, added the cavityfighting agent to its supplies in 2003.

Peterson was also instrumental in the building of Diamond Valley Lake, a major reservoir for Southern California, and he served on a group that helped determine allocation amounts of Colorado River water to adjacent states and other water agencies.

He calls his recent Met boardmember vote to fund the Bay Delta twin tunnels water distribution system was one of the toughest decisions in his career.

“My bet is that he will continue to be active in the water industry moving forward while he embarks on his next adventure in life,” Las Virgenes vice president Charlie Caspary said. “We all are eternally grateful for his guidance and leadership, and wish him the best for years to come.”

—Acorn staff report

Water district approves up to \$650M to aid tunnels

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ventura County Star 5/09/2018

SAN JOSE, Calif. – A Northern California water agency voted Tuesday to support Gov. Jerry Brown’s plan to build two massive tunnels to remake the state’s water system.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District board voted 4-3 Tuesday to support the \$17 billion project and to commit up to \$650 million to help pay for it, The Mercury News in San Jose reported.

The vote in a packed chamber followed a four-hour discussion of the 35-mile, 40-foot high tunnels to divert water from the north to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

Brown, who argues the twin tunnels will modernize California’s water delivery system, called the board’s decision “courageous.”

“Simply put, this courageous decision will help two million Santa Clarans have a more reliable water supply,” he said in a statement.

Unions and Silicon Valley’s largest business group had recommended a yes vote.

But environmental groups opposed the proposal, saying the project would be a water grab from Northern California and would degrade wildlife and water quality in San Francisco Bay and the Delta, while also writing a blank check for ratepayers.

“We want to try and get stability and cover the future needs of Silicon Valley,” said board member Tony Estremera, who voted to support the project. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It’s important for us to have as much security as we can.”

Critics say the tunnels would allow large agribusiness interests in the San Joaquin Valley, as well as urban users in Los Angeles, to eventually take more fresh water out of the Delta, a fragile system of islands and sloughs.

“Other than labor and the business community, I have not received a single message of support,” said board member John Varela, who voted against the project. “I choose not to mortgage our constituents’ future with unfettered debt.”

The vote comes six months after the board voted 7-0 to reject the twin tunnels and support a smaller, one-tunnel approach.

But the board reversed course after the California Water Commission staff released a favorable assessment about the public benefits of the district’s Pacheco Reservoir expansion project, for which it is seeking \$485 million. The commission’s staff earlier determined the project wasn’t eligible for funds. It was one of five projects found to be worthy of money after they were originally rejected.

The Water Commission consists of Brown appointees who can distribute \$2.6 billion from a water bond approved by voters in 2014. It has not made a final decision on the Pacheco Reservoir project.

But Santa Clara water officials say it is incorrect to suggest the district reconsidered its position because of potential reservoir funding and point out some board members changed their minds after the large Metropolitan Water District in Southern California voted last month to fund the bulk of the project.

The MWD, which supplies water to 19 million people in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas, approved \$10.8 billion in funding for the project.

Proposal to place state tax on drinking water is wrong step

Your Turn

*Susan Mulligan Guest columnist
Ventura County Star 5/04/2018*

As the largest urban water supplier in Ventura County, serving nearly 700,000 residents, the Calleguas Municipal Water District is committed to delivering safe and reliable water to our customers.

Unfortunately, some Californians who live in small, rural, disadvantaged communities may not have access to safe drinking water. While we wholeheartedly support the goal of ensuring safe drinking water for all Californians, the latest state proposal to impose a new tax on drinking water is the wrong solution.

Similar to state Senate Bill 623 proposed by Majority Leader Bill Monning, D-Carmel, a budget trailer bill introduced by the Brown administration proposes this new tax on drinking water, a first for California. The state should take a leadership role in solving this problem, but the public believes that taxing Californians for something essential to life is inappropriate and does not make sense, especially at a time when some are raising concerns about the affordability of water and the cost of living in our state.

Simply put, taxing drinking water — an essential life-sustaining resource — is just not sound public policy.

There is a better approach. The Association of California Water Agencies, Calleguas and scores of other urban and agricultural water agencies throughout the state believe a package of ongoing federal safe drinking water funds, voter-approved general obligation bonds, proposed assessments related to nitrates in groundwater and a limited amount of state general fund dollars would be a more reasonable, practical alternative for funding such a program.

Underscoring this, a recent survey commissioned by the water agency association revealed that out of 1,000 likely California voters interviewed, an overwhelming 73 percent were opposed to a statewide tax on drinking water.

Calleguas recognizes the need to control water costs to minimize rate impacts. At any given time, it has multiple, large-scale and costly capital improvements underway. The common denominator shared by all of them is an effort to maintain the most efficient and reliable water service possible for ratepayers.

Such projects include Calleguas' \$200 million Salinity Management Pipeline that will enable local retail water providers to treat brackish groundwater sources from the Oxnard Plain to Simi Valley, and new pump station and emergency generator facilities required to deliver stored critical drinking water supplies throughout its 375-square-mile service area during potential outages of our imported water supply following an earthquake or other emergency.

Our ability to provide customers with clean, safe drinking water depends on this work. Forcing thousands of urban water agencies, large and small, to divert resources away

from similar critical water reliability projects for the benefit of their ratepayers, and to become taxing authorities for the state, would impact each agency's ability to keep rates as low as possible while implementing much-needed local infrastructure improvements.

Something else to consider is the proposal's unintended consequences. Calleguas is among roughly 3,000 water suppliers of all sizes operating in California. The proposal to tax drinking water could require many districts to hire more staff to administer the tax and reprogram billing software. This would prove exceptionally difficult for small water districts already operating on shoestring budgets.

The proposed tax on drinking water would take more money out of our community and send it to Sacramento. Please join me in opposing a drinking water tax and supporting a more appropriate funding solution. More information is available at watertaxfacts.org.

Susan B. Mulligan is general manager of the Calleguas Municipal Water District.

Outlook for vital river remains grim

*Dan Elliott ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 5/08/22018*

DENVER – The outlook for the most important river in the Southwestern U.S. remains grim this summer after April storms failed to produce much snow in the mountains that feed the waterway, forecasters said Monday.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the Colorado River is expected to carry only 43 percent of the average amount of water into Lake Powell, one of two huge reservoirs that store and distribute the river.

It's the fifth-lowest forecast in 54 years.

"It's pretty dramatic. It's a very low runoff season," said Greg Smith, a hydrologist with the agency.

But officials have said that Lake Powell and its companion, Lake Mead, will be high enough to avoid mandatory cutbacks for water users this year.

The Colorado River serves about 40 million people and 6,300 square miles of farmland in United States and Mexico.

Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah all use the river or its tributaries, along with 20 native American reservations.

The river is under increasing stress because of rising demand and declining flows. The region has been in a drought for 18 years – long enough that some researchers say it may represent a permanent shift.

Global warming is also contributing to the reduced river flows, scientists said.

Last year's snowfall was uneven but mostly below average across the mountains that feed the Colorado.

The western Wyoming mountains that give rise to the Green River, the Colorado's largest tributary, received 116 percent of their average snow at the peak of the winter, Smith said.

But river valleys in southwestern Colorado ranged from 44 to 56 percent of average at their best.

"Southwest Colorado had their lowest precipitation on record," Smith said.

One significant storm hit the Colorado River region in April, but snow fell only at the highest elevations, Smith said. Lower regions got mostly rain, and unlike snow, rain runs off immediately and can't be as easily captured in reservoirs for later use.

Water levels in some mountain rivers will peak in the next week or so as the snow melts, Smith said. That's earlier than usual but mostly within the normal range, he said.



In this May 1, 2005, photo, Lake Mead, which separates Arizona, bottom, and Nevada, top, is seen from the air, east of Las Vegas. Forecasters say this year's outlook for the most important river in the Southwestern U.S. remains grim. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Monday that April storms failed to produce much snow in the mountains that feed the Colorado River, and Lake Powell is expected to get only 43 percent of the average inflow from the river. AP