

# NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public Outreach**

Organized by date

# Procter & Gamble settles water dispute

*Oxnard sued, claiming plant rerouted supply*

By Gretchen Wenner  
Ventura County Star 10/25/2013

Oxnard has settled a legal squabble with a local Procter & Gamble plant regarding \$1 million worth of water the city said was secretly routed to the facility over four years.

In the settlement, Procter & Gamble Paper Products Co. agreed to pay \$637,500 and denied all allegations in a lawsuit filed by the city in December.

The Cincinnati-based consumer goods company makes Bounty paper towels and Charmin toilet paper at a facility at 800 N. Rice Ave.

Oxnard appears to have agreed to accept less than what it thinks it's owed because city staff members should have noticed the problem earlier, according to a legal memo drawn up last month.

The city's lawsuit said an emergency bypass system had been used from July 2006 to October 2010 to supply water to the plant, reducing flow through the main metered line. A contractor for P&G cut through a chain on a locked city hand wheel to open a valve to the bypass system and also opened a downstream valve that should have been closed, the suit says. P&G didn't pay for about 515 million gallons valued at a little more than \$1 million, according to city calculations.

The Sept. 30 memo from interim City Attorney Stephen Fischer says that seeing whether valves are open or shut is easy. A large jack screw, which in photos appears as thick as a broomstick, extends up about 1 foot when valves are open.

'The valves for the emergency bypass are only a few feet from the water meter on the main supply line, which city operational staff inspects daily,' the memo says.

Had the case gone to trial, the information could have been used to reduce the amount the city recovered to about \$465,000, Fischer wrote.

The city provided the memo to The Star in response to a query about the status of the suit.

A P&G spokesman previously said the company disagreed with the facts in the lawsuit

and valued its relationship with the local community. The spokesman was traveling this week and could not be reached for comment.

The settlement, signed by Mayor Tim Flynn and dated July 31, was apparently approved by the City Council during the summer. The case was discussed in closed-door meetings in June and July, but the council reported no action. On Sept. 17, the council again met in closed session regarding the case and reported no action. The case was dismissed Sept. 19.

Some council observers have complained recently in public comments about the lack of reporting from Oxnard's closed-door sessions. California cities, counties, school districts and other public bodies are subject to open-meeting laws known as the Ralph M. Brown Act.

Fischer said Wednesday the city's reporting fully complies with the Brown Act.

In the case of a settlement in which final approval rests with the other party — in this case, P&G — the city only has to disclose the information if someone asks about it, he said. The city immediately provided information after The Star inquired about the case.

Terry Francke, general counsel for Californians Aware, a nonprofit in Sacramento County devoted to open government, said the public must be vigilant.

In circumstances such as the P&G settlement, he said, "The Brown Act is structured in a way that puts the burden of inquiry on the public."

Francke said nothing in the law prevents cities from disclosing more than is required. In addition, individual council members are free to disclose matters that are public record, he said.

Just because a council does not have to disclose an item collectively "does not mean the lips of individual members are sealed," he said. "But people do have to ask."

On the Internet: Read the settlement agreement and city memo with investigation report at [vcstar.com](http://vcstar.com).

# IN with chill, OUT with gross

## ***Newbury Park gets new fountains***

By Amy Bentley Special to The Star  
Ventura County Star 10/25/2013



PHOTOS BY CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Connor Williams (left) and Jonas Miller stop between classes at one of Newbury Park High School's new water stations, which replaced old fountains at the 47-year-old school that were described as 'gross' and 'nasty.'

Students at Newbury Park High School have a fellow student to thank for two new fixtures that offer chilled, filtered water.

Senior Kathryn Reinke said she was inspired to bring the water stations to her school because the old fountains on the 47-year-old campus were 'gross' and dirty and the water that came out of them was warm.

'No one really wanted to use them, but people need to hydrate and stay healthy,' said Reinke, 17.

Her father, Brent Reinke, co-founded Vapur, a company that makes and sells flexible, reusable water bottles. Vapur also offers stainless-steel hydration stations where people refill water bottles .

The Vapur water refill stations are at college campuses including UCLA and CSU Channel Islands, as well as some national parks, so Kathryn Reinke thought: Why not bring them to Newbury Park High?



The stations chill the water and include a special outlet for filling reusable bottles.

To raise money, she bought 100 reusable Vapur bottles at the wholesale price of \$5.50 each and sold them for \$10 each at supermarkets and at a marathon in Thousand Oaks last spring. By selling the bottles and receiving donations from people who didn't want a bottle but gave money to the cause, she raised more than \$2,600 — enough to buy two water stations at \$1,300 each.

She ran the idea past Principal Athol Wong, who was supportive. Wong said the water refill stations were in line with the school's efforts to be more environmentally conscious.

"It's great. She came in last year, and we were very strapped in terms of the budget," Wong said.

The fixtures were installed over the summer.

"We selected areas near the locker rooms so the students would have access to the cooled water because many of them have water bottles anyway," Wong said.

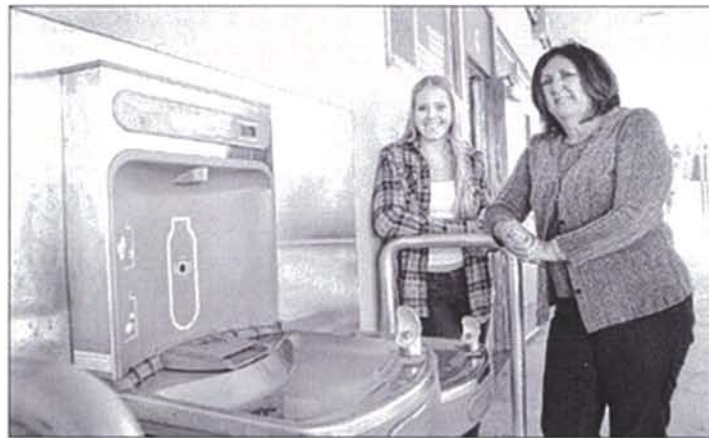
The walls in that area are stucco, so the stations were easily installed, Wong said, adding that she was happy to see the "really old, nasty water fountains in those areas" replaced.

"Our athletes are crazy about them," she said of the new fountains.

The school will buy two more Vapur stations, Wong said. One will be installed near the band room and the other probably will go near some classrooms.

The fixtures have a ticker that shows the number of uses. Reinke said she checked the tickers for an update Oct. 4 and found they had gotten about 16,300 uses.

“A lot of people noticed how much better it is tasting,” she said of the water.



CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Senior Kathryn Reinke (left) and Principal Athol Wong show off one of two new water stations on the campus. Wong said the school plans to add two more of the stations.

# Watering down a bill

Ventura County Star 10/25/2103

**Dear Readers:** Did you know that conserving water now can reduce your water bill later? Most water companies do “winter averaging.” To determine the sewer portion of your bill, the water company monitors the water usage in the winter months, usually mid-November to mid-March. This helps you save money, because this is the time of year when water usage usually is the lowest. (No lawn watering, pool filling, etc., depending on where you live.) But you still can conserve more during this time and lower your bill. Here are some hints for how to reduce the amount of water you use:

- Check toilets and pipes for any leaks.
- Turn off the faucet while brushing teeth.
- Fill a sink with water to wash dishes instead of letting it run.
- Limit your time in the shower.
- Run only full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine.

— **Heloise**



# Split vote gives OK to Westlake water tank

*Bids will go out*

By Sylvie Belmond  
The Acorn 10/24/2013

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board of directors voted 3-2 on Tuesday to seek bids for its proposed new water tank in Westlake Village, a move that all but assures the 5-million-gallon tank will be built in the city's Three Springs neighborhood, despite ongoing protests from some board members and residents who feel the tank is too costly and not needed.

"I think there is legal exposure for the district if we don't go ahead," said Lee Renger, who voted in favor of the proposed \$10-million potable water tank.

Renger whose house in Stokes Canyon was destroyed in a brush fire in 1970, said the tank is essential to provide adequate supplies for firefighters, among other reasons.

In August, the directors approved plans for the tank and began to seek pre-qualified contractors for the project. Four general contractors and two blasting subcontractors met the criteria.

Bids are due Dec. 3. The board will interview qualified contractors on Dec. 10, and if all goes as planned officials will award the bids in January.

"This district is in need of this tank and has been for a long time," director Glen Peterson said.

Director Barry Steinhardt said because of Three Springs' wariness about the construction and complaints by customers in general that the tank will cause water rates to rise, the project should have been put to a vote of the people.

"Ratepayers are not happy about this tank," Steinhardt said. "I think we should put a bond measure in front of voters to see if they would put this tank on this site."

Steinhardt said it was ironic that the winner of a district-wide contest that sought alternatives to the water tank was also a tank, albeit one of different construction.

Tony Galterio, a senior project manager with WHPacific Inc. in Lakewood, Colo., suggested the alternate tank.

"What stood out about it is that it met key criteria," water district general manager David Pedersen said.

Agoura Hills resident Martin Jansen, a retired engineer, received second-place honors for his suggestion that the district could establish an interconnecting pipeline with



Calleguas Municipal Water District, which supplies water to about 600,000 people in Camarillo, Moorpark, Oxnard, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Port Hueneme and surrounding unincorporated areas.

The shared supply theory would save money for the ratepayers, said Jansen, a leading opponent of the Three Springs tank.

Jansen said the infrastructure is already in place to supply potable water to area residents in an emergency, and that the connection would provide mutual backup for the Las Virgenes and Calleguas water districts.

“The best thing that could happen is for this whole tank project to be shelved,” Jansen told *The Acorn*.

Jansen said the call for suggestions was a sham because the board never intended to use any of the alternatives proposed.

The tank is intended to solve a storage deficiency in the district’s western potable water system. In July, as opposition to the tank began to build, the water board agreed to seek alternative ideas. The proposals had to meet industry standards and be sustainable for the area, which is vulnerable to earthquakes and fires.

A five-member judging panel met Sept. 25 to evaluate the proposals, weighing creativity and uniqueness, feasibility, costs, ability to meet regulatory requirements and expected level of public support or concern.

But after more than two years of debate and a gnashing of teeth over alternatives, directors continue to be at odds about the need for a new tank.

Board directors Peterson, Renger and Charles Caspary say the project is essential and voted Tuesday to seek construction bids. Steinhardt and Len Polan opposed.

Polan said a connection with Calleguas should be enough to solve possible water shortages in the event of a large brush fire or other emergency.

“I feel this may be a solution,” he said.

Pedersen recently met with Westlake Village officials to discuss how the city and water district can work together to reduce construction impacts for residents in Three Springs.

Letters

## Residents fear Westlake tank construction

Regarding the proposed 5-million gallon water storage tank by the LVMWD, there is another important aspect for all residents of Westlake Village and customers of the water district to consider. While it certainly is the role and responsibility of the LVMWD board to decide if the tank is needed and where it might be built, is not a good decision to use a residential neighborhood (Three Springs) for construction traffic.

According to the plans, a multitude of heavy construction vehicles will use Three Springs Drive and Torchwood Place daily as a staging area for a more than two-year period.

Several concerned residents of Three Springs have given legal notice to the LVMWD Board and Westlake Village City Council regarding the potential risk of personal injury and property damage if a LVMWD construction vehicle has an accident. That's where every LVMWD customer and Westlake taxpayer would be involved. Both entities would face severe liability in such a lawsuit if it were proven the residents' safety concerns were not addressed.

Just as in your neighborhood, Three Springs families use their streets for walking, biking, jogging and skateboarding, and children play on them. As a father of four, I know the quickest way to make sure your child does something is to tell them not to do it. Warning children to stay off Three Springs streets during the construction period is not reasonable or prudent.

Construction trucks use pneumatic brakes, which have failed in the past. Consider the potential water rate increase and tax revenues wasted if such a disaster occurred.

The solution: visit a Westlake village City Council meeting or write and request them to enact California DMV Code section 35701(a). Many cities have used this law to place a weight limit on vehicle traffic through residential neighborhoods for safety.

*Frank Bonvino  
Westlake Village*

Where does your drinking  
water come from?



Join us for a special tour and learning adventure

**Saturday, Nov. 2, 2013**

**8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

go "behind the scenes" to look at the planning, infrastructure and challenges to delivering safe, reliable, high quality water to your home everyday.

Reservations are a must for this *FREE* tour.

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*Continental breakfast and light lunch provided.  
Moderate walking and stairways. Restricted to ages 12 and  
older; children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.*

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# New solar plant will stabilize power costs for local water agencies

By Sylvie Belmond

The Acorn 10/24/2013



POWER PLAYERS—From left, Mike McReynolds and Mike Paule of the Triunfo Sanitation District; Glen Peterson of LVMWD; Tim Pershing, field deputy for Assemblymember Richard Bloom; and State Sen. Fran Pavley unveil a solar panel during a facility dedication ceremony hosted by the Las Virgenes and Triunfo Joint Powers Authority on Oct. 18. SYLVIE BELMOND/Acorn Newspapers

### The future?

It belongs to the efficient and the progressive, officials said at the dedication of a new solar facility that will power the pumping of recycled water for the Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and Triunfo Sanitation District co-own the Tapia Wastewater Reclamation Facility, which cleans and redistributes the area's wastewater.

In April, the JPA signed an agreement with SolarCity to build, run and maintain a solar facility on a 6-acre site near the Rancho Las Virgenes composting facility in Calabasas. The JPA paid no upfront costs. The joint powers authority will pay a fixed rate for the solar energy generated by the system. The amount will be less than it currently pays the utility company, officials said.

"What you see here should be replicated all over the state," said state Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Calabasas), who has written a number of bills that helped to create a market for solar power.

Because companies provide the upfront capital costs, solar power is increasingly attractive for residential and commercial use, said the senator, who gave JPA leaders a sustainability award after her speech.

The solar-power plant is expected to go into operation in two or three months, said Jim Carhill, regional manager for SolarCity.

Power produced at the 1-megawatt facility will be used to pump recycled water.

The reclaimed water is used to irrigate landscaping at golf courses, parks, school grounds, highways, businesses and common areas in some multifamily residential complexes.

The solar panels will generate 2.3 million kilowatts per year, which represents about half of the electricity required to operate a nearby pump station, Zhao said.

Under the agreement with SolarCity, the district anticipates saving \$2 million in electricity costs over the next 20 years.

The 1-megawatt solar-energy system, consisting of 3,630 panels, will offset an estimated 82 million pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> that would otherwise be needed generate power using fossil fuels over the lifetime of the system.

Panels will track the sun to provide maximum power throughout the day.

"I do like the idea that we have kind of closed the cycle here, transporting recycled water using renewable solar power," said Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, an environmental activist and former Triunfo Sanitation District board member.

"I can't laud you enough for the good work you are doing . to reduce the carbon footprint," Parks said, adding that Ventura

County is also working to expand the use solar power for its public facilities. About 20 percent of the energy consumed in California is used for cleaning and transporting water.

The JPA will purchase power at a fixed rate of 10.5 cents per kilowatt hour, saving the group about \$100,000 per year.

The average cost of electricity from Southern California Edison is 13.4 cents per kilowatt hour. These costs are likely to rise years to come.

"The project would not have been possible without the public/ private partnership, and it's the first of its kind in the area for solar projects," said David Pedersen, LVMWD general manager.

Power consumption is one of the major costs of delivering water. The new solar power plant will allow the district to save percent on electricity costs and help to keep recycled water rates stable.

It provides stability for one of the key operating costs LVMWD, said Mike McReynolds, chair of the JPA.

“We’ll be using a renewable resource to distribute a reclaimed resource,” said Charles Caspary, JPA vice chair. “It’s just one example of the environmental stewardship of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.”

# For California, water wars flow

*Supply, ecosystem drive Delta debate over tunnel effort*

By Timm Herdt  
Ventura County Star 10/24/2013 & 10/20/2013



AP PHOTOS BY RICH PEDRONCELLI

A boat cruises down the Delta Cross Channel between the Sacramento River and Snodgrass Slough near Walnut Grove. In an effort to stabilize fisheries and water supply, the Bay Delta Conservation plan proposes transfer water via tunnel from the Sacramento River near Clarksburg to the Clifton Court Forebay near Tracy.

TRACY -Overlooking the Banks Pumping Plant, where 11 giant pumps lift water 244 feet up a hill to the mouth of the California Aqueduct, Water Resources Supervisor Jim Odom lamented a miscalculation last winter that resulted in 800,000 acre-feet of water never making it up that hill.

Northern California had experienced exceptionally heavy rainfall in November and December, creating a surge of runoff into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. A surplus appeared primed for export to Southern California. The storms had produced an abundance of turbid water, the kind preferred by the endangered Delta smelt.

The pumps kept running, sucking the turbid water south, which brought with it hundreds of smelt. Had the pumps been turned off, Odom said, perhaps they could have successfully been turned back on after natural water flows allowed the fish to make their way farther north, beyond the pull of the pumps.

But with the arrival of the smelt near the pumps, power had to be turned off. And 800,000 acre-feet of Delta water — the equivalent of an eight-year supply for the State Water Project's 615,000 customers in Ventura County — was allowed to flow into San Francisco Bay.

Then the rains stopped, and Northern California experienced one of the driest January-March periods in history.

“It would have been nice,” said Eric Bergh, resources director for the Thousand Oaks based Calleguas Municipal Water District, “to have that 800,000-foot slug of water in San Luis Reservoir.”

Embedded in that incident are nearly all the issues that have long bedeviled water experts, conservationists and politicians concerned about how to manage the Delta in a way that restores its fragile ecosystems while still allowing the massive plumbing system that delivers water to 25 million Californians to function as intended.

Now, after a decade of false starts and seven years conducting \$200 million worth of environmental studies, a proposed solution is nearly at hand.

Very soon, state and federal officials will release the draft environmental report for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, a \$25 billion project that proposes a series of fixes designed to stabilize the Delta for the next half century.

“The Delta is one of the most highly studied places in the world, but on the other hand, there is much uncertainty,” said Charles Bonham, director of the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. “This is hard stuff. It may be the most intractable natural resources problem in America.”

The Bay Delta Plan calls for the creation of more than 100,000 acres of wetlands designed to restore habitat for endangered plants and animals, including smelt, salmon and 55 other species.

More controversially, it also calls for construction of two 30-mile tunnels, each 40 feet in diameter, that would be planted 150 feet beneath the Delta.

The tunnels would allow water to be diverted from the Sacramento River, bypassing much of the fragile Delta.

## **EXPORTING WATER**

The impending release of the environmental report has triggered a renewal of the bitter, north-south water wars that have been a geopolitical hallmark of California for more than a century, since Los Angeles water engineer William Mulholland first set his sights on the eastern Sierra’s Owens Valley.

For all the biological opinions, habitat restoration plans and economic impact studies, there is really just one question that fuels the debate: How much water can safely be



exported without doing harm to the Delta?

From the perspective of Northern Californians, the question is framed somewhat differently: How much of what they consider to be their water is Southern California going to take?

Under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan proposal, the answer is fairly straightforward: about the same amount that is exported from the Delta now — roughly 5 million acre-feet per year.

Jeffrey Kightlinger, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, says while that's not a terrific answer, it's good enough.

"We've lost probably 30 percent of the flow due to endangered-species cutbacks," he said. "We hope to get some of that 30 percent back, but realistically, we know we're probably not going to get back to where we were."

What's essential to Southern California, Kightlinger said, is that the current level of exports be reliably preserved to maintain the viability of the State Water Project.

"If we do nothing, we will continue to erode until some point, it reaches a bottom line where it doesn't work anymore."

## **STRONG OPPOSITION**

For residents of the Delta, where "Don't Drain the Delta" signs have sprouted along rural roadways, the perspective is decidedly different.

Among them is Cathy Hemly, whose six-generation farm family grows pears, apples and kiwis on 1,000 acres near Courtland. The family has been farming its land in the Sacramento River Delta since before the Civil War.

"This is nothing but a proposal to re-plumb the Delta," she said. "There's no new water here; it's just putting a straw in a different spot. We know that the system is oversubscribed. How do you remove water from a waterbased ecosystem and call it conservation?"

Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, whose district represents parts of four counties that make up the Delta region, asserts that for all the scientific studies that have been conducted, the answer to the most fundamental question is still uncertain.

“Nobody knows what it will take to prevent the further degradation of the Delta,” she said. “The question to ask is: How much water can safely be exported? Somewhere between 3 million and 4 million acrefeet per year would probably be realistic.”

Yet, she argues, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan seeks the issuance of a 50-year permit for water diversions of about 5 million acre-feet per year. It also would create an extraordinarily complex governance structure for making decisions on how to adapt to environmental issues as they arise.

“The people in charge are the same people who created the problem,” she said. “The issue is, who’s got their hand on the pump? Who can shut it off? Who’s going to be in control for 50 years?” In recent years, it has largely been federal judges and federal wildlife agencies that have been calling the shots.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

Throughout the development of the Bay Delta Plan, says state Natural Resources Secretary John Laird, California water planners have been working “arm in arm” with federal regulators. They have responded, one by one, to “red flag memos” that have required refinements to the Bay Delta Plan.

The end product, Laird says, “is actually a habitat restoration plan. There has never been a restoration project this big in the country, with the possible exception of the Everglades.”

The proposed tunnels would accomplish one long-sought goal because diverting water from the Sacramento River would reduce the amount of pumping in the south Delta that has disrupted natural flows and contributed to the demise of fish species.

Laird notes that both the solution, which has been considerably downsized, and the environmental problems, which have dramatically worsened, should make the debate over the Bay Delta Plan substantially different from the bitter 1982 ballot fight that resulted in voters soundly rejecting a proposed Peripheral Canal around the Delta.

“The thing that’s really different is that the status quo isn’t working,” he said in a recent visit to Ventura County.

At this point, he argues, the consequences of doing nothing would be disastrous for all.

“Do you want to have exports drop off and have the ecosystem crash?” he said.

## **BOTTOM LINE**

Beyond the environmental and water-supply issues, there is another element of the Bay Delta Plan that raises serious concerns: money.

The tunnels are the most expensive component, accounting for \$19 billion of the estimated \$25 billion cost. Critics assert the actual costs could go much higher.

Under the state's "beneficiary pays" principle for water projects, the tunnels would be funded entirely by individuals and businesses that use the water exported from the Delta.

Kightlinger estimates that the incremental costs, averaged across the massive Metropolitan District, would amount to no more than \$5 a month to a typical Southern California household. But because Delta water is its only source of imports, the effect in Ventura County would be more dramatic.

Calleguas officials estimate the marginal costs to its customers after 10 years of tunnel construction would be \$150 to \$200 per acre-foot per year. An acre-foot is enough to serve about two Southern California households for a year. Metropolitan estimates the monthly increase to average homeowner that uses 100 percent imported water from the Delta, such as those in Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks, would be \$6 to \$8 per month.

Rising water costs have become a fact of life in Southern California .

The rate charged by Metropolitan has about doubled over the past decade and is anticipated to double again over the next 10 years, ultimately reaching about \$1,700 an acre-foot.

Calleguas General Manager Susan Mulligan said the only option for Ventura County if adequate supplies from the Delta are not preserved is to pursue ocean water desalination — which would carry a price tag in the neighborhood of \$2,500 per acre-foot.

"That is our alternative to the BDCP," she said. "It's all we've got."



AP PHOTOS/RICH PEDRONCELLI

A fisherman tries his luck at the Clifton Court Forebay on Sept. 23 near Tracy. The Bay Delta Conservation Plan proposes building a tunnel to transfer water from the Sacramento River near Clarksburg to the Clifton Court Forebay, where it's pumped for use to Central and Southern California.



A tugboat pushes a barge down the Sacramento River in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta near Rio Vista. Along with providing a source for commercial transportation and pleasure craft, the Delta is also the home of a variety of fish and wildlife and provides much of the water for Central and Southern California cities.



Debris collects on a floating trash boom at the John E. Skinner Delta Fish Protective Facility as water flows from the Clifton Court Forebay down the intake channel to the Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant near Tracy. Fish pass this boom and are diverted from the intake channel, collected and trucked back up to the delta, where they are released in either the Sacramento River or the San Joaquin River.



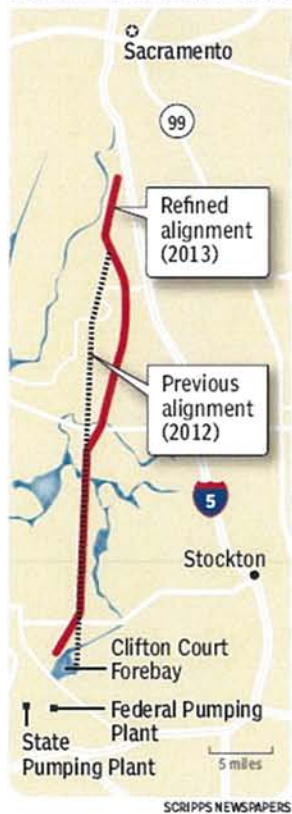
Gordon Enas, principal engineer of the state Department of Water Resources Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program, is confronted by project opponent Rogene Reynolds during a tour of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta near Walnut Grove. Reynolds opposes the Bay Delta Conservation Plan to transfer water via tunnel from the north part of the Delta to the southern Delta.



Water flows through fish diversion louvers at the John E . Skinner Delta Fish Protective Facility from the Clifton Court Forebay on its way to the Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant.

Fish collected at the Skinner facility are trucked back up to the Delta, where they are released in either the Sacramento River or the San Joaquin River. Water pumped from the Banks facility proceeds down the California Aqueduct for use in Central and Southern California.

### TUNNEL SOLUTION



Year	Metropolitan Water District (rate to Calleguas District)	Calleguas Water District (rate to county cities)
2003	\$408 per acre-foot	\$489
2005	\$443	\$547
2007	\$478	\$597
2009	\$579	\$769
2011	\$744	\$981
2013	\$847	\$1,119

### WATER RATES

The cost of imported water in Southern California has been marching sharply upward, doubling during the past decade. It is projected to double again through the next decade. The cost of paying for construction of the through-Delta tunnels, water officials say, would only incrementally contribute to that trend.

## House approves \$8.2 billion water projects bill

*Sides tout job creation in approval*

By Henry C. Jackson Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 10/24/2013

WASHINGTON — Bucking some of the same conservative groups that encouraged the government shutdown, Republicans and Democrats united Wednesday to overwhelmingly pass an \$8.2 billion House bill mapping out plans for dams, harbors, river navigation and other water projects for the coming decade.

Members of both parties praised the measure just a week after Congress voted to end a bitterly partisan standoff that shuttered much of the federal government for 16 days and threatened a first-ever default on its debt. It passed the House 417-3.

Conservative Republicans defied conservative groups like Freedom-Works, Taxpayers for Common Sense and Heritage Action for America that opposed the water projects bill after whipping up sentiment for the government shutdown as a tactic for rolling back President Barack Obama's health care law.

The water bill's sponsors attracted support from members of both parties by including projects from coast to coast and labeling the measure an engine for job creation. To attract conservatives, sponsors emphasized the measure's lack of earmarks, or projects for lawmakers' home districts, and changes including an accelerating of required environmental reviews that have dragged out many projects for years.

"Transportation is one of the few things Congress should actually spend money on," said Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., a conservative elected in the tea party wave of 2010.

Congress last enacted a bill approving water projects in 2007, a lapse that created pent-up demand among lawmakers for such work. "This bill is about strengthening our infrastructure so we can remain competitive. It's about economic growth, it's about trade, it's about jobs," said Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which wrote the measure.

## PORT HUENEME EROSION

# Beach help sought in bill

*Add-ons aim to show effects on jobs, Navy*

By Michael Collins  
Ventura County Star 10/24/2013

WASHINGTON -Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Westlake Village, said Wednesday that two amendments she attached to a broader water resources bill could help make the case for more federal funding for dredging and other repairs to fight beach erosion in Port Hueneme.

One amendment requires the Government Accountability Office to issue a report on the number of jobs created by Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund projects at small- and medium-size ports across the country. The trust fund is used every year to pay for dredging and other maintenance at ports and commercial waterways, including the anti-erosion efforts in Port Hueneme.

The second amendment requires the Army Corps of Engineers to consider the Navy's interests when setting priorities on how the trust fund money will be spent.

'There are several ports in Ventura County where the Navy has a particular interest, so I think in terms of moving Ventura County forward and strengthening our economy and strengthening the ports in Ventura County, this is a very positive bill,' Brownley said.

Brownley attached the amendments to an \$8.2 billion bill that authorizes hundreds of dam, harbor, river navigation and other water projects in the coming decade.

The House approved the bill late Wednesday, 417-3. The Senate passed its own version in May. Negotiators from both chambers will work to iron out the differences in the two pieces of legislation and put together a final package.

Brownley said the two amendments she attached to the House version grew out of her efforts to secure more federal funding to repair beach erosion in Port Hueneme, which has been particularly severe this year.

For half a century, the Navy and the corps have split the federal government's cost of



the antierosion efforts, which include dredging sand from Channel Islands Harbor and using it to replenish the Port Hueneme beach every two years.

The corpshaspaidfor its share of the cost through the trust fund, which was set up in 1986. Money for the trust fund is generated through a 0.125 percent tax on the value of imported cargo on commercial ships and passenger vessels.

Millions of dollars in the trust fund remain unspent because Congress, which decides every year how much of the money should be used, has allotted just a portion of the funds generated by the tax.

The House version of the water-resources bill contains a phase-in provision requiring that at least 80 percent of the revenue generated by the tax be allocated for use by 2020. The Senate version also dictates that a larger share of the money be spent each year.

Brownley said the report required under her amendment would show that projects financed by the trust fund create jobs and stimulate the economy. She said she thinks that could eventually help make the case for Congress to allot all the funds, which could in turn mean more money for communities such as Port Hueneme.

“Everybody understands that large ports create jobs and are good for the economy,” she said. But “sometimes people who don’t live close to a (small) port don’t have an understanding that investments and doing the appropriate dredging and maintenance does create jobs. It certainly does and will continue to do that in Ventura County.”

# Bigger picture sought at project update

*Council views water usage, jobs balance*

By Arlene Martinez

Ventura County Star 10/23/2013

What began as a City Council update on residential, commercial and industrial projects in the pipeline turned into a discussion of water availability and whether the city of Ventura likes where it appears to be heading.

At the request of the Ventura City Council, Community Development Director Jeff Lambert on Monday gave the council updates on various projects. By neighborhood, Lambert laid out what he called a 'wide mix' projected to become part of the cityscape.

Some have been in the works so long the approvals have expired, while others continue changing to meet market conditions.

Councilwoman Cheryl Heitmann asked whether the city had an adequate water supply to meet the demand of all the projects, the bulk of which are residential.

City Manager Mark Watkins said the most recent water resources report included the expected water needs of entitled projects and ones in various stages of review.

But Heitmann wasn't convinced, saying the city needed an 'overall picture' of the developments' effect on the water supply.

'You get different numbers from different people and agencies about the amount of water, and do we have enough and where is it coming from,' Heitmann said Tuesday.

She said including water use with project updates would help the council understand the situation.

'It's important for us to be looking at the bigger picture. We have to see how the whole thing goes together,' she said.

Lambert said that as part of his annual update to the city's general plan, he would include water use and supply, as the council had requested earlier this year.

'We'll talk about water as it relates to development we see coming,' Lambert said Tuesday. A discussion is expected in March.

Councilwoman Christy Weir asked whether the city had analyzed the effect the projects would have on Ventura's housing and jobs balance.

"Right now, we have a really good jobs/housing balance," she said.

Weir said by her count, the projects in the pipeline included 734 single-family homes and nearly 3,000 apartments and condominiums.

"We're becoming way less family-friendly. Most are one- and two-bedroom," she said. "Proportionally, we're moving toward a whole different flavor of what we may not be intending."

Reducing the number of owner-occupied dwelling units and replacing them with rentals affects the stability of a community, Weir said.

Weir asked whether the trend was an "unintended consequence" of the city's infill strategy.

Heitmann requested that staff members return with detailed information on each project, including a breakdown by type of unit and the expected price range for residential units.

The council took no formal action on the matter.

For a full list of projects, visit <http://www.cityofventura.net/cd/planning>. Click on "Planning" and then "Pending Projects List" from the drop-down menu.

## Letters

Bill Horne, Ojai

Ventura County Star 10/23/2013

### Ojai's water fight

Almost 90 percent of Golden State Water Co. ratepayers in Ojai voted for Measure V on Aug. 27. The ratepayers made it very clear the people of Ojai wanted Golden State gone.

Golden State now wants to challenge Casitas Municipal Water District's financing method in court— just to add to the cost of our purchase and spend more of our money and allow this rogue water company to overcharge ratepayers. Golden State refuses to sell, even though it originally agreed to do so in its franchise agreement with the city. Golden State never has represented Ojai nor had any interest in this community other than for financial gain.

The state's Public Utilities Commission never has represented Ojai, but has ignored the pleas and requests for what little we ask; yet, Golden State gets most of what it asks for.

To our elected officials: You are working for the people. Without more loss of time, do the right thing and end greedy Golden State's financial gain in this beautiful Ojai Valley.

## Activists target Coachella water district in voting change effort

By Jean Merl

*LA Times October 21, 2013,*

Opening a new front on efforts to improve minority representation on local elected boards, attorneys representing several Latino citizens have accused the Coachella Valley Water District of violating the California Voting Rights Act.

In a letter delivered Monday to John Powell, the district's board president, lawyers Robert Rubin and Megan Beaman said the district's at-large election system "dilutes the ability of Latino constituents to elect candidates of their choice to the board or to influence the outcome of board elections."

The letter asks the district to switch to a system of electing board members by geographic district or "other lawful system" or be sued.

Though the sprawling district has large numbers of Latino residents, the Coachella Water District's board members all are white.

Heather Engel, a district spokeswoman, said Monday that officials had not yet had a chance to digest the contents of the letter but that they would "fully and promptly review the request outlined in the letter."

"It brings up some serious issues, and we'll take them seriously," Engel said.

Rubin, who helped write the state's decade-old voting rights law, and other activists have been pushing for an end to at-large elections in cities and school districts across California. They are targeting jurisdictions with significant minority populations but little or no minority representation and where precinct analysis reveal patterns of racially polarized voting.

Going after the water district signals that activists are ready to expand their efforts to lesser-known governmental bodies.

"We now intend to target special districts, which can be important sources of political power," Rubin said.

In the past, some community college districts and school boards have switched from at-large to by-district elections to avoid costly lawsuits but others have resisted, particularly

cities. Whittier, which has been sued, decided to ask voters whether they want to switch to by-district elections. A judge recently found Palmdale in violation of the state law and agreed to a plaintiff's request to cancel the Nov. 5 election, but an appeals court allowed the election to proceed.

# Council to study river job

*Santa Paula to hear request to spend \$4,000*

From staff reports  
Ventura County Star 10/21/2013

The Santa Paula City Council will be asked Monday night to approve spending \$4,000 a year to help pay for a coordinator for the Santa Clara River Watershed.

The coordinator will plan and implement projects and make sure that all parties involved with the watershed are informed on a timely basis.

The river is one of the largest river systems in Southern California and flows some 84 miles from its headwaters west through Los Angeles County and Ventura County past Santa Paula before emptying in the Pacific Ocean between Oxnard and Ventura.

Other public entities also are being asked to provide money for the position. They include an \$11,000 contribution from Oxnard and an \$8,000 contribution from Ventura. Port Hueneme and Fillmore are each being asked to give \$4,000.

The coordinator's position is expected to cost \$63,500 a year.

The council will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Santa Paula City Hall, 970 Ventura St.

Across the nation

T E X A S

## Group wants grass to be replanted

Ventura County Star 10/21/2013

EL PASO — A group of veterans, relatives of buried soldiers and others are continuing their efforts to convince the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to replant grass a military cemetery at West Texas.

The landscape of the Fort Bliss National Cemetery in El Paso reflects that found in the rest of the city. As part of drastic measures to stabilize its water supply, El Paso in the last two decades has ripped up grass from many public places, installing rock and cactus gardens and encouraging residents to do the same in their homes.

Earlier this year, the cemetery received the Texas Environmental Excellence Award for saving about \$400,000 a year in reduced water costs, labor fertilizer and pesticides.

But the El Paso Times reported that 68-year-old veteran Frank Winslett began a campaign six weeks ago to pressure federal officials to replant grass at the cemetery.

Winslett says the cemetery would look better with grass and would allow family members to kneel down next to their relatives' graves and honor their loved ones the same way it is done at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Wire services



## ENVIRONMENT

### Ocean drillers of ten frack

### Oil technique more widespread than state thought

By Alicia Chang Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 10/20/2013



#### ASSOCIATED PRESS

An oil worker sits during a ferry ride away from Freeman Island, one of the four artificial islands in San Pedro Bay off the coast of Long Beach used for oil drilling. Oil companies have fracked from man-made islands off Long Beach and platforms off the Orange County coast for years, and state regulators are only now realizing that the technique is more widespread than originally thought.

**LONG BEACH** -The oil production technique known as fracking is more widespread and frequently used in the offshore platforms and man-made islands near some of California's most populous and famous coastal communities than state officials believed.

In waters off Long Beach, Seal Beach and Huntington Beach - some of the region's most popular surfing strands and tourist attractions - oil companies have used fracking at least 203 times at six sites in the past two decades, according to interviews and drilling records obtained by The Associated Press through a public records request.

Just this year in Long Beach Harbor, the nation's second-largest container port, an oil company with exclusive rights to drill there completed five fracks on palm-tree-lined, manmade islands. Other companies fracked more than a dozen times from old oil platforms off Huntington Beach and Seal Beach over the past five years.

Though there is no evidence that offshore hydraulic fracturing has led to spills or chemical leaks, the practice occurs with little state or federal oversight of the operations.

The state agency that leases lands and waters to oil companies said officials found new

instances of fracking after searching records as part of a review after the AP reported this summer about fracking in federal waters off California, an area from 3 miles to 200 miles offshore. The state oil permitting agency said it doesn't track fracking.

Although the latest revelations are not near Ventura County, fracking has taken place off local shores.

The Associated Press, based on a review of federal documents, reported on Aug. 3 that hydraulic fracturing had taken place at least a dozen times in wells in federal waters in the Santa Barbara Channel and that approval had been granted for another operation at Platform Gilda, nine miles off the Ventura County coast.

As the state continues its investigation into the extent of fracking — both in federal waters and closer to shore— and develops ways to increase oversight under the law, environmental groups are calling for a moratorium on the practice.

“How is it that nobody in state government knew anything about this? It's a huge institutional failure,” said Kassie Siegel, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Offshore fracking is far more common than anyone realized.”

With increased public awareness of the practice has come a move to regulate it in the state, although much of the attention has focused on land-based fracking.

Gov. Jerry Brown in September signed legislation by state Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, that will establish California's first rules detailing how oil drillers use fracking.

The law will require drillers to disclose the chemicals used and acquire permits before they use fracking. Other provisions of the legislation, which will take effect in January, will require oil companies to test groundwater and notify neighboring landowners before drilling.

State officials will have to complete a study by January 2015 evaluating risks of fracking and other well-stimulation techniques, such as using acid to break apart oil-rich rocks.

Little is known about the effects on the marine environment of fracking, which shoots water, sand and chemicals at high pressure to clear old wells or crack rock formations to free oil. Yet neither state nor federal environmental regulators have had any role in overseeing the practice as it increased to revitalize old wells.

New oil leases off the state's shores have been prohibited since a 1969 oil platform blowout off Santa Barbara, which fouled miles of coastline and gave rise to the modern

environmental movement.

With no room for physical expansion, oil companies instead have turned to fracking to keep the oil flowing.

The state began investigating the extent of offshore fracking after the AP report in August. California officials initially said at the time there was no record of fracking in the nearshore waters it oversees. Now, as the State Lands Commission and other agencies review records and find more instances of fracking, officials are confused over who exactly is in charge of ensuring that the technique is monitored and performed safely.

“We still need to sort out what authority, if any, we have over fracking operations in state waters; it’s very complicated,” said Alison Dettmer, a deputy director of the California Coastal Commission.

Nowhere is the fracking more concentrated than in Long Beach, an oil town with a halfmillion residents and tourist draws like the Queen Mary.

The city of Long Beach’s oil arrangement stems from a deal drawn up in 1911, when California granted the tidelands and other water-covered areas to the city as it developed its harbor. When oil was discovered in the 1930s, the money started coming in.

Long Beach transferred \$352 million of \$581 million in profits to state coffers in fiscal 2013 from onshore and offshore operations, according to the city’s Gas and Oil Department. Most of the oil recovery comes from traditional drilling, while fracking accounts for about 10 percent of the work.

The department says fracking is safe. It has a spill contingency plan and monitors pipelines. Well construction designs are approved by state oil regulators. The designs can be used for conventional drilling and fracking. And the oil industry says offshore fracks are much smaller operations than onshore jobs, involving only a fraction of the chemicals and water used on land.

City oil officials see themselves as partners with Occidental Petroleum Corp. — not regulators — though officials participate in the company’s internal audits and technical reviews by the state.

Occidental and the city briefly took a fracking timeout after passage of the state’s new rules. Long Beach oil operations manager Kevin Tougas said there are plans to frack again later this year. Occidental spokeswoman Susie Geiger said in an email that the company doesn’t discuss its operations due to “competitive and proprietary reasons.”

No one is tracking the amounts or precise composition of any fracking chemicals that enter the marine environment, though in September the state passed a law that starting in 2015 would require disclosure of agents used during the procedures.

Fracking fluids can be made up of hundreds of chemicals — some known and others not since they are protected as trade secrets. Some of these chemicals are toxic to fish larvae and crustaceans, bottom dwellers most at risk from drilling activities, according to government health disclosure documents.

Myriad state agencies that oversee drilling, water quality and the ocean said they did no monitoring of fracking chemicals during offshore jobs.

Don Drysdale, a spokesman for the California Department of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, said the new regulations will include “extensive protections” for groundwater.

The industry estimates that about half of the fluids used during fracking remain in the environment; environmentalists say it is much higher. Long Beach says it uses a closed system and there’s no discharge into the water. Instead, fluids are treated before being re-injected deep under the seafloor.

The Long Beach Water Department, which monitors well water quality annually, said there are no known impacts to residents’ water from fracking.

“It’s our hometown,” said Chris Garner, a fourth-generation resident who heads the gas and oil department. “We have a vested interest in making sure the oil operations have been without harm to the city.”

# Calabasas solar project to help power water recycling plant

By Carol Lawrence

Ventura County Star 10/19/2013



PHOTO BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, VENTURA COUNTY STAR // BUY THIS PHOTO

VINIT SATYAVRATA/SPECIAL TO THE STAR State Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills (center), Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority Chairman Michael McReynolds (far left) and Vice Chairman Charles Caspary (far right), remove the cover of a panel at the dedication of a solar power generation facility in Calabasas.



PHOTO BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, VENTURA COUNTY STAR

VINIT SATYAVRATA/SPECIAL TO THE STAR State Sen. Fran Pavley (left) congratulates Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority Chairman Michael McReynolds (right) and Vice Chairman Charles Caspary at the dedication of the solar power facility in Calabasas.

On nearly seven acres of exposed land in Malibu Canyon off Las Virgenes Road, a solar array that will have 3,630 rotating panels is under construction to absorb sunshine and convert it into energy.

Once the array is online, anticipated by the end of this year, 30,000 Ventura County customers of the Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority may see their rates drop. The authority expects to save money through a fixed-cost deal it negotiated with the company that will build and own the array.

Energy from the 1-megawatt array will supply about half the power needed to operate the joint authority's recycled water plant, which provides non-potable water for plants and trees and other uses in Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Oak Park, Westlake Village, part of Thousand Oaks and unincorporated areas.

The joint authority also operates a wastewater treatment plant and a composting facility that converts residuals from the treatment plant into mulch for customers.



PHOTO BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, VENTURA COUNTY STAR

VINIT SATYAVRATA/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks (center) and Leonard Polan, a member of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board of directors (right), remove the cover of a panel at the dedication of a solar power generation facility in Calabasas.

“It’s definitely going to be a savings” for the joint authority, said Michael McReynolds, who chairs the boards of both the authority and the Triunfo Sanitation District. “It will be a matter of just which account the savings will be put into — the overall (wastewater) treatment process or just recycled water.”

Officials with the authority, a partnership of the Triunfo Sanitation District and the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, celebrated the project Friday with officials and politicians against a backdrop of neatly aligned foundation posts that will hold the panels.

“We are under the sun, in the spirit of solar, which we have so frequently here in Malibu Canyon,” David Pedersen, joint power’s general manager, told an audience that included state Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, and Ventura County Supervisor [Linda Parks](#).

Pedersen said fixed energy costs for 20 years are the result of the public/private partnership with SolarCity Corp. in San Mateo, which will build, own and maintain the array.

Under the 20-year contract, SolarCity pays for the array’s construction and will sell power to the authority for 10½ cents per kilowatt hour, Pedersen said. The authority now pays [Southern California Edison](#) 12½ to 13 cents per kilowatt hour, he said.

The array should create yearly savings of about \$122,000, and more than \$2 million over the life of the contract, the authority estimates.

“The real value is in the future, when power costs go up,” Pedersen said before the event. “This gives us more certainty for operating costs.” The goal is to stabilize customers’ rates, he added, but the joint district is subject to regulations and other issues that could escalate those costs.

The authority also is expanding its distribution capabilities, McReynolds said, and is in negotiations to see if water could also be delivered to parts of Los Angeles.

Jim Cahill, SolarCity’s regional vice president, said the company spent nearly \$3 per watt to build the array and expects to recover that cost and profit from it during the contract, he said, from a 30 percent federal tax credit it will get, by writing off depreciation on the equipment and on selling the energy.



PHOTO BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, VENTURA COUNTY STAR

VINIT SATYAVRATA/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Tophier Blunt (right), an employee with SolarCity, watches Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority General Manager David Pedersen speak at the dedication.

Cahill told the audience the power from the solar array over its lifetime will equal the effect of removing 750 cars from the road. Better yet, the power will support a recycled water plant, he said.

"This one's exceptional for the truly sustainable aspect of the project," Cahill said.

Pavley spoke about her support for the project she called a "win-win," and how Assembly Bill 32 — the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 that she co-authored mandated that greenhouse gas emissions return to 1990 levels by 2020 — created a market for investment into renewable energy projects.

"What you see here should be replicated through the state," Pavley said.

She also gave the JPA one of her monthly awards for environmental achievements.

Parks called the array an "excellent project" to help reduce rates.

"One of the best things is recycled water and now we will be able to energize that," she said.



Tom Landau, CEO of the Clean Technology Council, a local industry group for clean technology businesses, experts and professionals, and a customer of the authority, simply called the project “great.”

“There should be many more of these coming,” Landau said.

### **Project facts**

**User:** Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority, or JPA

**Array size:** one megawatt

**Location:** Off Las Virgenes Road in Calabasas between the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District headquarters and the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility

**Purpose:** To help power JPA’s recycled water pump station

**Peak output:** more than 2 million kilowatt hours per year, equivalent power to light about 1,000 homes

**Power produced:** Estimated to offset more than 82 million pounds of carbon dioxide and 44,785 trees over the system’s estimated life span

**Installer, owner, maintainer:** SolarCity Corp.

# Turf project gets look

*Camarillo boosters want to raise \$1.7M for football field*

By Wendy Leung  
Ventura County Star 10/19/2013



PHOTOS BY TROY HARVEY/THE STAR

The Camarillo High School varsity football team practices on the grass field Wednesday after noon. At its next meeting Wednesday, the Oxnard Union High School District Board will consider an agreement with the booster club on a donation for a turf field.

Last year, the booster club at Camarillo High School raised \$80,000 for Scorpion sports teams. This year, the club wants to raise at least \$1.7 million.

The big purchase on the Scorpion Athletic Booster Club's wish list is a artificial turf. The current grass field has seen better days.

'When you're playing football, you don't really think about the field, but during practice, you slip a lot,' said varsity safety Tanner Held, 17. 'The whole center of the field is basically dirt.' There might be a home advantage when playing in Camarillo, but at away games, there are better fields, Held said.

'When you're playing an away game, you almost look forward to it because it's a nicer field,' he said.

At its next meeting Wednesday, the Oxnard Union High School District board will consider an agreement with the booster club on a donation for the turf field. The club wants to raise \$1.7 million by February for a new track, turf for the field and turf for the area near the visitor stands.

Next year, Camarillo High will move to the Marmonte League, where all the schools have turf fields.

'Our kids aren't going to be able to practice on turf and get the advantage of turf compared



The Camarillo High School varsity football team practices on the grass field Wednesday afternoon. The Camarillo High booster club is looking to raise money for an artificial turf field.

to other schools,” said Bob Graham, booster club vice president.

Graham also has safety concerns. The grass field marked by dirt is a hard surface to play on, he said.

The school board was scheduled to vote on the turf project last week, allowing the club to begin fundraising. But several trustees wanted more information, including a memorandum of understanding, before giving the green light.

Board member Gary Davis said he wants expectations from both the club and the district in writing.

“I don’t think that should be a gentleman’s handshake. I think that should be in the form of an MOU,” Davis said at the last board meeting.

Board member Socorro Lopez Hanson said she wants more research done by a third party on safety issues with artificial turf fields.

“It seems to me like we’re rushing this through,” she said.

Davis said all board members appreciate the booster club’s offer.

“This is our first venture into turf,” he said. “We just want to make sure we’ve done our due diligence.”

If the club is successful, Camarillo High will be the first school in the district with a turf field. But it's not the first time a booster club has made such a significant donation to the district.

Rio Mesa High School's pool was donated by a group of parents who raised the money after seeing a need for an aquatics program.

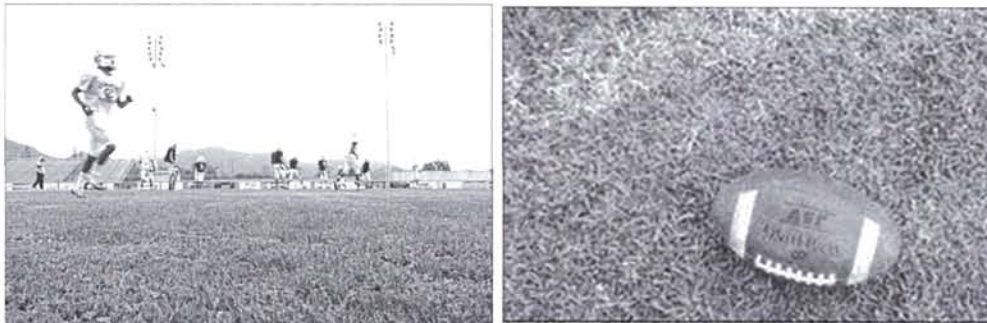
With multiple years of budget cuts, Graham said, the only way the school will get a new field is with private money.

"At the end of the day, if you want to get it done ... this is the most expeditious route we can take," Graham said. "With budget cuts, it's just not realistic for the school district."

If all goes according to plan, the booster club hopes to have the turf field ready in June.

It would be too late for Held, a senior, but he's not too disappointed.

"I'm really not that bummed because I know all my friends who will play football will get to use it," Held said. "I'm kind of excited to see it. I want to come back and visit and see the field."



PHOTOS BY TROY HARVEY/THE STAR

The Camarillo High School varsity football team practices on the grass field Wednesday afternoon.

Oxnard Union High School District board member Socorro Lopez Hanson said she wants more research done by a third party on safety issues with artificial turf fields.

A football sits on the grass field Wednesday during practice.

## It's Time to "Feed" Your Garden

Whether you're a casual home gardener with a lawn and a few blossoms in a flower bed, or an ardent aficionado who raises home-grown fruits and vegetables, your soil has been working hard to produce the results you've enjoyed through the spring and summer months.

Autumn is the perfect time to replenish the nutrients given up by your soil through the growing season and an ideal soil amendment is available to you free each Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. It's "Community Compost" from the Rancho Las Virgenes (RLV) Composting Facility, located at the intersection of Las Virgenes and Lost Hills Roads in Calabasas.

Applying compost now allows your soil to replenish lost nutrients through the winter months, making your garden "ready to grow" next spring. The process is natural and even more effective if we're lucky to have some gentle rainfall through the winter months.

RLV Community Compost complies with the exacting U.S. EPA specifications for the "Class A - Exceptional Quality" designation. That means it is an excellent soil amendment that's been tested and verified to meet a number of specified standards. The technical data for RLV compost can be found at [www.LVMWD.com](http://www.LVMWD.com); click on "RLV Community Compost."

Best of all, it's free! Just bring a sealable bin, container, sturdy plastic bags or a tarp to cover pickup truck beds or trailers. RLV supplies the shovels to load your own supply, you provide the labor.

So instead of letting your soil take a lazy winter nap, get a head start on next year's growing season by "feeding" your soil the nutrients it craves now and you'll enjoy the benefits later.

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# Running dry

*Conservation advocates warn of imminent depletion of water resources*

By Art Van Kraft 10/10/2013

VC Reporter

The people of Ventura County might have to change the way they think about water — or live in a world much different than today's.

The changes would start gradually. First we would see our water bills go up, with fines added over a certain limit. We have something like that now. Then residents would be encouraged to report any water abuse they see. Fines and citations would be issued, and attendance at water education schools will be required. Soon neighbor would be turned against neighbor and community against community. Restraining orders would be granted and eventually a water police would be formed to patrol the streets. Finally, a special Water Commission would determine how much water your household or business needs. When that limit was reached, water restrictors on pipes would simply shut the water off. Lawns would become thing of the past; pools would be empty and plants dead. Voluntary migrations would follow. (This scenario was created by the San Diego County Water Authority for drought conditions in East San Diego in 2008.)

“Right now we are living in what I call a cycle of insanity,” said Paul Jenkin, environmental director of the Ventura Surfrider Foundation. “I was looking at a dry Ventura Riverbed at Foster Park today. The city has pumped out that water to use. At the same time, I went down to McGrath State Beach and it's closed because it's flooding. It's the same water. It is being used once and pumped into the sewer system, treated, then emptied out into the ocean. Those two issues are directly connected although a lot of people don't see that connection.”

Each city in Ventura County has its own water system. Thousand Oaks gets 100 percent of its water from the state pipeline. Oxnard, Camarillo and Moorpark get about half their water from the state and half from local groundwater. Ventura, Ojai, Fillmore and Santa Paula get all their water from the ground.

“Our area is very unique in all of Southern California because everywhere else, from Oxnard to the Mexican border, is dependent upon imported water.” Jenkin said.

The city of Ventura has a newly released Comprehensive Water Resource Report. It warns residents that by 2017, water resources could be over-tapped. The city's average annual water demand for 2005 to 2009 was 19,300 acre-feet/year, which is uncomfortably close to our current available water supply (19,600 AFY).

“I see an opportunity in Ventura to be somewhat sustainable and live within our means as long as we don’t outgrow our water supply. The water needs to be put back into the landscape. You import water from hundreds of miles away, use it once, then put it into a treatment plant and pump it back into the ocean. The real insanity comes when you want to pump that water back out of the ocean and take the salt out of it, then do it all over again,” Jenkin said.

But Jenkin is starting to become optimistic. “For the first time in recent years the Ventura Water Department is shining a light on the fact that we’re kind of at our limit as far as our water supply. Unless we find new water we don’t have water to fuel a lot of the growth that the city of Ventura is planning.” To help sort out the enormously complicated water situation, Jenkin has joined the Water Coalition of Ventura County, a group that hopes to consolidate all county water issues under one roof.

Mike Solomon is not so optimistic. He is the general manager of the United Water Conservation District that controls water from Lake Piru. It has a capacity of 100,000 acre-feet. Because of low rainfall its level is down to 20,000 acre-feet.

“We are in the third year of a drought. In our area the ground water levels dropped below sea level last month. That means sea water is slowly pouring into the aquifers and we are not pushing it out. Until we get some huge rains, more and more of the groundwater is going to be contaminated.” said Solomon.

Although he has been a growth advocate in the past, Solomon said the situation has changed.

“We’re taking 30,000 acre-feet more water out of the ground than we’re putting in and that’s not sustainable. This year we’re looking at taking about 90,000 acre-feet more water than we put back in. Any new development is now required to show where they will get enough water. That’s very hard to do. We don’t have any more to allocate really. It would be very difficult for me to say let’s keep growing when I am saying to you, we are already in overdraft,” Solomon said.

At a recent meeting of Farm Bureau of Ventura County he delivered the grim news. The farmers and strawberry growers on the Oxnard Plain and Pleasant Valley Road will only receive half of the water they need during the peak October growing season this year. All Solomon could offer them was advice on conservation.

But there are many people in Ventura County who say that is the ultimate solution. Jenkins' Surfrider Foundation along with a score of city, county and grass-roots groups, has been spreading that message for a decade, with modest results. But according to Jenkin, now the tide has changed and people are listening.

"In the past, the city of Ventura had decided to use desalination as the best way to get more water in the future. But right now the city is seriously looking at ways to implement a larger-scale recycling of their used water," Jenkin said.

What about just tying into the state water system? This month the Bay Delta Conservation Plan that would tunnel under the Sacramento Delta got good news. The state Natural Resources Agency gave its approval. It's not the final OK, but a big boost. It will cost \$25 billion, \$17 billion of that will be passed on to consumers over the next 50 years. Twin tunnels buried up to 150 feet beneath the delta's peat soil would carry the water south, with the hope that water supplies can be delivered even if climate change alters the delta. It will be the second largest public works project in California history. Agency Secretary John Laird came from Sacramento to the Reagan Library to urge Ventura County to accept the tax burden. His agency supports the project as the best solution to solving our water problem. Jenkin said that is not a solution for Ventura.

"We are learning that large capital improvement projects and large infrastructure projects are not solutions. Even the cost of connecting to the state water project and the potential unreliability of it, would make it less attractive than even the horrendous cost of ocean desalination."

Those desalination costs are significant. According to Solomon it would take 15 to 20 years to even start the construction of a plant here. Ventura County bulk water rates average \$800 per acre-foot. San Diego has started building a plant and will have to charge \$ 2,200 per acre-foot.

In many people's minds, that leaves conservation. Ventura city's water conservation coordinator, Jill Sarick, has joined forces with the Surfrider Foundation to form outreach groups that see 7,000 students a year.

"We teach people to take water that would normally run off down the street. In a lot of new developments you see gutters that run into pipes directly under the landscape and into the street and into the storm drain. We are teaching people how to cut the downspout and redirect the water into rain or sponge gardens and yards that can store it in the soil. These are native landscapes that use the water differently than a lawn."



Thanks to the Rainwater Capture Act of 2011 people can collect their own reserve supply. "Rain barrels are people's first experience with conserving water. We get on average 14 to 15 inches a year. We've only had five or six inches in the last few years. You can store up to 360 gallons on your property without a city permit. One inch of rain on a 1,000-square-foot roof gives you 620 gallons," Sarick said.

"We give 60-gallon rain barrels at half-price to Ventura city residents at Smith Pipe and Supply," Sarick said. "They hook up together."

Sarick promotes a program called Ocean Friendly Gardens, one she hopes will change the face of the city.

"As we moved west they still built for flood control and they didn't really have a concept of what they were doing to the watershed. The watershed science has developed significantly in the last decade. We've put all this hardscape and concrete and rooftops that drain everything away, and it's obsolete." Sarick said.



Lisa Burton, owner Ventura-based Nature by Design, is known as the lawn killer by replacing lawns with natural drought-tolerant gardens, such as this one in Ventura.

Lisa Burton calls herself the lawn killer. She owns Nature by Design, a Ventura company that takes out traditional landscapes and installs very unique ones in their place.

"One of my missions in life is to get rid of lawns, in favor of gardens," Burton said. "There are a lot of reasons; one is having plants with drought tolerance. A lawn takes a

lot of water, a lot of maintenance, fertilizer. It takes, takes, takes and gives nothing back.”

Burton holds to the concept that natural gardens bring everything back in line with nature instead of fighting it.

“When you put in a garden, whether it’s native plants or drought-tolerant plants, it gives to the environment by providing habitat for birds, butterflies, bees and insects you don’t even see. It creates an ecosystem that benefits our environment. We got very much out of balance with these lawns that are pieces of green that don’t contribute much, and now we’re seeing a trend returning back to creating a healthy environment,” Burton said.

“As I remove one lawn at a time and replace it with a garden, the culminating effect to the neighborhood can be really substantial. You create a whole neighborhood with an ecosystem, and that ecosystem has a thriving population of live creatures.”

Burton said the idea is starting to catch on as more people find lawn a luxury from a different era. Most golf courses and parks are irrigated with sophisticated reclaimed water systems, but up to 70 percent of household water is used by landscapes. Sprinklers have been under scrutiny lately and are now considered one of the worst offenders.

“Lawns start to look really boring and sort of silly; so does the water bill. This is a movement that is going on across the country, but there are three reasons to keep a lawn — kids, dogs and recreation. Of course that can be in the backyard, not the front,” Burton said.

The Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO, completed a municipal review in 2012. It broke down the amount of water each city used per household. Thousand Oaks residents use 222 gallons per person a day, Camarillo, 212 gallons; Ventura, 168 gallons; Santa Paula, 155 gallons; and Oxnard, 132 gallons. United Water District hydrogeologist Dan Detner said the discrepancy in those figures represents landscaping use.

Diane Underhill, president of Ventura Citizens for Hillside Preservation, is a regular contributor to Ventura City Council meetings. She focuses her efforts on stopping the demands of city-approved building.

“We need to stop approving future development projects. Our available water supply has been committed. In drought times, our water supply has been over-committed. We have known for a long time that our city was approaching the crossover point where our water demand will outstrip our local water supply.”

Underhill has criticized the way the city is evaluating the problem. She said the Residential Growth Management Plan was the only program that tried to tie limited water resources to the city’s growth. She said that unfortunately, in 2005 it was replaced with the Housing Approval Program. “The City is signing checks that can’t be cashed, all by giving out new development permits,” Underhill said.

As far as the county is concerned, Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks explains that it is not easy to get a new waterline approval.

“It’s very difficult to get new projects that are not already in a water district approved. There are real limitations on taking areas that are not already being served and bring new imported water in. Wheeler Canyon along the 126 or Hidden Valley are areas that are very difficult to get water to. They don’t have that much water to begin with, and the county laws prohibit putting in water lines. ... We don’t see them as urban uses.” Parks said.

Parks is also concerned about the cascading cost of water throughout the county.

“You’re paying for Metropolitan Water and their service costs, and Calleguas and their costs, then the next water agency that provides it to your home. There are several agencies that handle that water. As a result, the rate payers can get dinged a lot. The rates vary incredibly throughout Ventura County; some people pay five times as much as others. It all revolves around a complex system,” said Parks.

Many Ojai residents pay the highest water rates in the county and put forward Measure V, which passed. The measure will force the sale of their current provider Golden State Water Co. to Casitas Municipal Water District. The move will give them more control over rates.

Coincidentally, the United Water Conservation District was just delivered a blow to its rates. The Santa Barbara Superior Court ruled in April that the United Water Conservation District has been unconstitutionally overcharging the city of Ventura for water. United was recently ordered to refund to the city the principal amount of

\$962,866 plus 7 percent interest. The charges stemmed from a practice of charging lower rates for agriculture users. United said it was within its legal rights to charge more; the court disagreed.

Water conservation advocates and pipeline supporters may differ on solutions, but they do agree that some change is needed. Supervisor Parks said, that as a county official, she must allow all doors must remain open, or at least considered, until the problem is solved.