

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

Water tank injunction thrown out

Judge allows work on Westlake tank to proceed

By John Loesing

The Acorn 2014-06-12 / Front Page

Los Angeles Superior Court ruled against a temporary restraining order that would have stopped construction on the new water tank being built in the Westlake Village Three Springs neighborhood.

Judge Joanne O'Donnell allowed construction of the 5-million-gallon tank to proceed, although she said in her seven-page ruling on June 4 that she still needed more information on the case.

A lawsuit against the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District tank filed by Three Springs resident Frank

Bonvino is expected to go to trial.

Both sides in the tank dispute claimed victory.

"We're pleased the court confirmed the (water) district followed a rigorous public process allowing ample opportunity for public input on the project," LVMWD general manager David Pedersen said in a statement.

"The District has been and continues to be committed to transparency, particularly when it considers major capital projects. As a public agency providing essential services to some 70,000 people, we cannot compromise or risk public health and safety when the facts indicate the need for a specific project," Pedersen said.

Judge O'Donnell found that LVMWD followed proper procedures in preparing the project and gave the public ample opportunity to voice concerns, the water district said. The judge also said the water district performed a "thoughtful assessment" of the risk of Valley Fever and that no credible evidence was presented to substantiate a supposed threat of the disease.

"We are very pleased with a favorable ruling and confirmation that the district followed the appropriate process to approve the project," LVMWD board president Charles Caspary said.

"The district will continue to work with the community, including the litigant, to minimize inconveniences caused by construction and to complete the project as quickly as possible."

The opponents of the tank immediately issued a response:

“The court did not make any determination of whether the district followed process or not; did not determine that the process provided ample opportunity for the public to be heard; did not opine on whether there’s increased fire risk without a tank; made no assessment of Valley Fever risk . . . and did not confirm, as president Charles Caspary indicated, that the district correctly followed due process.”

“While the temporary injunction was not granted, the court’s actions and comments made it clear that there was sufficient merit to the case moving forward to trial,” said Barry Steinhardt, a water district board member who has opposed the tank.

“In fact, the judge not only admonished the district’s counsel during the hearing, but made it clear in the written decision that a great deal of justification information by the district was missing. . . . Furthermore, it is a pure play on the public’s fear that we do not have enough water to fight fires,” Steinhardt said.

The opponents say it is “open to question” as to whether or not the water district violated the public process or followed proper procedure in developing its plans.

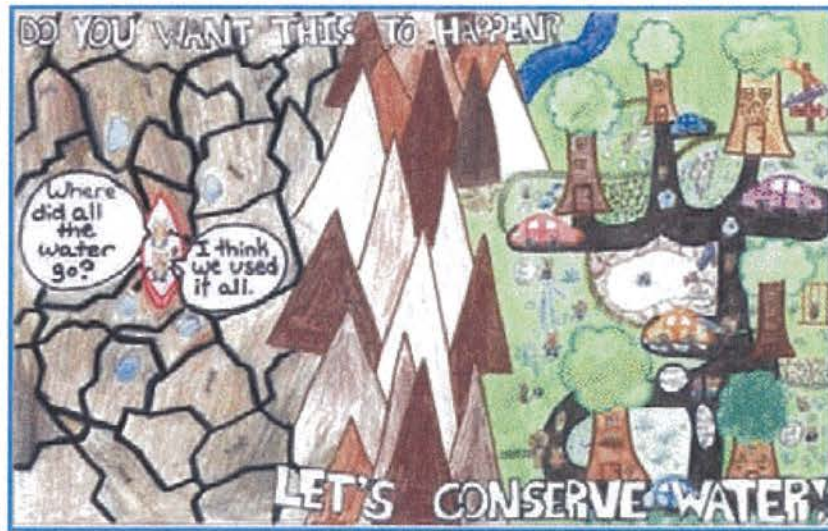
The judge, however, chided Bonvino for taking too much time in bringing his case to light. She brought up a pair of statute of limitations— 30 and 180 days after the tank project was first approved in 2009—that should have been followed.

Bonvino pointed out that LVMWD didn’t give final approval to the tank until January of this year.

He brought suit against the water district shortly after.

Construction on the water tank is scheduled to be completed in June 2015.

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24A460

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24A47D

Petition to halt tank denied

By Rachel McGrath
Special to The Star

A Los Angeles County Superior Court judge has denied a request for a preliminary injunction to halt construction of a 5 million-gallon water tank at a reservoir above Westlake Village.

Opponents of the water tank project said they believe that their case has sufficient merit to proceed and that their intention remains to go to trial in due course.

To issue a preliminary injunction, the court would need to find the petitioner, Westlake Village resident Frank Bonvino, likely would prevail at trial based on the merits of the case and that the harm to the petitioner if denied would outweigh the harm to the respondent, the water district, if an injunction were granted.

The judge ruled that the merits of the suit as presented were insufficient, that it was not filed in a timely manner as required under the law and that there was no evidence to show fears of an outbreak of Valley fever would be caused by the blasting and construction work at the dam. Valley fever is spread by spores in some airborne soil.

Bonvino, whose home is next to the reservoir site, sued the district April 24 in Los Angeles County Superior Court asking the court to nullify environmental approval for the tank construction project and the project approval.

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THOUSAND OAKS

Council weighs water options

City to look underground for supplies

By Teresa Rochester
Ventura County Star 6/12/2014

It might not be oil, but the groundwater beneath Thousand Oaks might be as good as gold in these water-challenged times.

The City Council decided at its meeting Tuesday night the possibility was worth investigating.

The council unanimously approved a \$355,000 contract with Los Angeles-based CDM Smith Inc. to study potential groundwater sources in the Conejo Valley, along with their quantity, quality, potential locations and treatment options.

A contingency fee of \$35,000 was approved as part of the 5-0 vote.

"The time is now for us as a local agency to look at alternative options," public works Director Jay Spurgin told the council. "The basin is full. We see it seeping out in parts of the city. ... Clearly, that is a resource we need to look at."

Using groundwater would bring the city full circle, Spurgin said. Groundwater was Thousand Oaks' sole source until the late 1960s.

By the 1970s, the underground supply had diminished with use. Currently, the city and the two privately held water companies that serve Thousand Oaks all rely on imported water.

But the cost of that water has more than doubled in recent years, and a drought is making the imported water less reliable.

"The level of pumping going on in the '60s was not sustainable,"

Spurgin said. "We need to find out what is sustainable."

The study, which is expected to take 12 months to conduct, will address that issue, along with the feasibility of local water supply options that include reclaimed water, stormwater capture and other sources.

The study also will look at desalting groundwater, potable and nonpotable.

Councilman Al Adam said the city was being farsighted in looking for ways to lessen its dependence on imported water.

Earlier in the evening, the council said goodbye to veteran Thousand Oaks Planning Commission member Mic Farris, who is moving with his family to New York.

The physicist and father of one has served on the planning panel three times. He most recently was appointed in 2011.

Farris also made three unsuccessful bids for a seat on the council.

Farris in 2012 launched the Right to Vote initiative in response to an appointment to fill an unexpected vacancy on the council.

The initiative called for having an election to fill any unplanned vacancy on the council. After the measure qualified for the ballot, the council adopted it as an ordinance.

At Tuesday night's meeting, he was presented with a plaque from his fellow commissioners for his service. Mayor Andy Fox and county Supervisor Linda Parks presented Farris with commendations.

"I've really appreciated all that you have given to the city," longtime Planning Commissioner Daryl Reynolds said.

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Public safety briefs

CASTAIC

Drought limiting boating on lake

One of the worst droughts to hit California in recorded memory is affecting boaters and others at Castaic Lake, the California Department of Water Resources said Wednesday.

The lake not only provides recreation but also serves as a reservoir.

Water levels at the lake are low because of the drought, state officials said, too low for boaters to use the lake's west boat ramp.

The low water levels will increase the danger of boating on the lake, officials said, adding that the lake's capacity for boats is being decreased from 500 to 300.

A boat ramp on the upper east end of the lake will stay open, officials said.

But lower lake boat launches are being limited to nonmotorized boats or motorized boats that use only their trolling motors.

Boaters are asked to call the office at the lake with questions. The number is 661-257-4050.

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Where Does Our Water Come From?

By Kathleen Sterling

Turn on the tap and think for a moment. With the drought and more and more conservation measures being put in place, it's important to know where our water comes from.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District must import 100% of our water. The soil in the area is so bad and the quality of the groundwater so poor that there are no underground wells today that can be used as a source.

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District was formed in 1958, after Calabasas had run out of water. Hidden Hills residents Alice Stelle and Eleanor de Carterer formed this paper, the *Las Virgenes Enterprise*, to get the votes necessary to form a district. Alice's husband Mac Stelle was one of the first directors of the new entity.

Art Whizin, developer of Whizin's Center, gave the right of way for significant parts of the system. At the time the Water District assumed that Las Virgenes area would grow to 200,000 residents from Calabasas to Thousand Oaks, and built a reservoir to have a reserve supply of water for that population, in case outside sources were cut off due to a quake or some other emergency.

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District is a government agency, with an elected board from five divisions: Hidden Hills, Calabasas and West Hills, South Calabasas, Westlake, Agoura-Triunfo and unincorporated areas of L.A. County.

Up until recently water was obtained from the State Water Project, which brought it down from Northern California's snow-packed mountains. Not since 1971 has the area gotten water from the Colorado River, which is overseen by the Metropolitan Water District.

Now due to the drought, some of our water is brought to the district from the Colorado River Aqueduct. The river is at



The giant pipes at the Gene Pumping Plant.

115% of normal capacity, thanks to cloud seeding by Metropolitan. "It's expensive but it works," said Glen Peterson, a LVMWD board member and Las Virgenes' representative to the Metropolitan board.

Our water follows a long, complicated route from the river to Calabasas - using 97 miles of tunnels, 58 miles of pipeline and 63 miles of canals. The water gets to Southern California through and over mountains, and through tunnels and desert to reach its final destination in Calabasas. It needs to be pumped up and gravity fed down through the Aqueduct.

which lifts water to an elevation of 741 feet, where it is held in the Gene Reservoir until needed. The Gene Pumping Plant then lifts the water to an elevation of 1,037 feet to the Copper Basin, which is a basically a holding basin with a capacity of 24,200 acre feet. The water is then gravity fed through the Whipple Tunnel down to the Iron Mountain Pumping Plant, which is at 903 feet. Water is then again pumped up to 1,047 feet and then down again through a series of tunnels to the Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant, which again takes water from a low of 966 feet up to 1,404 feet and through another

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District must import 100% of our water.

The Colorado River Aqueduct was built in 1939 and first used in 1941. It can move one billion gallons of water a day, which come from the Colorado River and then are stored in Lake Havasu behind Parker Dam. The dam also provides hydroelectric power, half of which is used to pump water through the system.

The water is first allocated to the Whitsett pumping plant,

series of tunnels down to the Hinds Pumping Plant, which takes it to a height of 1,807 feet.

Water then travel through another 63 miles of the aqueduct canal and ends up at Lake Matthews. From there it is treated at the Weymouth Water Treatment Plant in La Verne. The plant has a water quality lab where water is tested for particulates and

(Continued to page 16)

Where Does Our Water Come From?

(Continued from page 1 of the Enterprise only)

disinfected by ozonation – bubbling gas through the water. This destroys microorganisms and removes any unpleasant taste and odor.

From Weymouth the water goes to the Jensen Treatment Plant and through the Metropolitan's distribution system to Las Virgenes.

Currently the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California needs two million acre-feet to serve its client agencies (1 acre foot = 325,851 gallons – enough to serve two households a year.) The district gets approximately 800,000 acre-feet from the Colorado River, so it's still 800,000 feet short, which normally comes from the State Water Project. Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, a Metropolitan member agency, delivers approximately 22,000 acre-feet of water to its customers each year.

According to Peterson, Metropolitan has water in storage and is using it. "But we have two sources of water, investment and conservation. LWMWD was an early proponent of recycled water for parks, golf courses and common areas. Over 20% of our water is recycled," he told Valley News Group.

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District is constantly working to improve the system and maximize efficiency while minimizing usage. A new storage tank currently under construction in Westlake will actually increase storage for the next 30 years, and will allow the District to have a ready and reliable back up supply for peak-demand or emergency use. Work is continuing on the construction of a new Biosolids Digester at the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility site, where it will join two similar units that have been in use for more than 20 years. The new unit will provide a needed addition in the capacity to handle biosolids with the added benefit of energy recovery systems being built into the unit.

"We still need to conserve," said Peterson. "We've asked for voluntary 20% reduction of use per household, no irrigating from 10 am to 5 pm and no washing down driveways." According to District statistics, the community is on target for a 10% reduction, the next 10% will be harder. "If we don't reach the 20% goal by 2020 the District will not be eligible for loans and other subsidies," said Peterson, "so we're considering a future budget based billing system based on how many reside in a household."

Of course the question remains as to when Northern California water will be back on track. The system bringing water from the mountains is old, and salt water is seeping in the critical Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, through which State Water Project flows. The Delta Smelt controversy is still an issue, so water will continue to flow to us from the Colorado River.

Peterson concluded, "Water saved this year is water we'll need next year."

For more information on the Las Virgenes Water District and conservation ideas, visit www.lvmwd.com.

Valley News Group, June 12, 2014,

***Saving water is so easy,
even a grown-up can do it!***



www.LVMWD.com



Page 2, Valley News Group, June 12, 2014

Help Your Garden Grow and Save Water

**FREE Rancho Las Virgenes Community Compost Each
Saturday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

3700 Las Virgenes Road at Lost Hills Road

Now is the time to revive your garden's soil for the summer growing season.

Your garden will love the rich contents of Rancho Las Virgenes Community Compost. RLV compost is rated "Class A - Exceptional Quality" by the US EPA. Nothing speaks like results; that's why local gardeners and commercial landscapers come back again & again. And you can't beat the price - it's FREE!

By using RLV Community Compost, you help retain moisture content, enrich the soil, feed your plants (there are natural nutrients in the compost) and help the environment.

If you've never tried RLV Compost, you're missing one of the best-kept secrets in gardening. Bring heavy plastic bags, a sealable container or a tarp to cover your pickup truck bed. We'll supply the shovels and the compost.

Learn more ways to save water - visit our website at www.LVMWD.com and select Conservation.



The STA Program was developed through EPA funding and is supported by the US Department of Agriculture



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Rachel Burak, 5th Grade, Mrs. Smith, Bay Laurel Elementary



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Valley News Group, June 12, 2014, Page 11

Report: Make better use of water

Harvesting rain, recycling urged

By Timm Herdt
Ventura County Star 6/11/2014

As water-policy experts across California confront the effects of a three-year drought, a report released Tuesday by two environmental groups says they also must confront a more permanent problem: Californians are already using more water than nature provides.

"We've hit the wall in California," said Peter Gleick, president of the Oakland-based Pacific Institute. "We're past the point of peak water. Even in anormal year or wet year, we're overextended. We take too much water out of the system."

The report from the institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council concludes there is a gap of 6 million acre-feet per year between the water California uses and the amount that can safely be taken from rivers and pumped from aquifers.

However, the report finds there is more than enough water available to close that gap through increased agricultural and urban efficiency, water recycling and harvesting of rainwater that runs off urban streets and parking lots into drainage pipes and then into the ocean. Fully exploiting those options could produce up to 14 million acre-feet per year, the study says, enough water to meet the needs of every city in California.

"Our current approach to water use is unsustainable, but that doesn't mean there isn't enough water to meet our needs," said Kate Poole, a senior attorney for the council and co-author of the report.

The report comes as the state Department of Water Resources is circulating a draft environmental impact report on a massive Bay Delta Conservation Plan that would include construction of two tunnels to divert water from the Sacramento River; the Legislature is considering a water bond for the November ballot that might include money to build water storage facilities; and farming interests in Congress are calling for relaxed environmental rules to allow additional water to be taken from the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers.

The authors say there may be smarter and perhaps cheaper ways to address the state's water needs without creating problems that could have long-term consequences.

"Rivers and groundwater basins — we need to take care of these resources if we want to rely upon them in the future," Poole said.

UC Santa Barbara professor Bob Wilkinson called the measures recommended in the report "cost-effective, readily available and off-the-shelf techniques."

Wilkinson said although California farmers “have made significant advances” in more efficiently using water for crop irrigation, there is the potential for an additional 17 percent savings, which would free 5.6 million to 6.6 million acre-feet per year for other uses. He said those savings could be achieved without fallowing cropland or changing the mix of crops grown.

According to Wilkinson, improving urban efficiency could produce 2.9 million to 5.2 million acre-feet per year through such measures as leak repair, more efficient toilets and washing machines, and greater use of what he called “climateappropriate landscaping.”

Existing wastewater-reclamation projects produce about 670,000 acre-feet per year, and Wilkinson said he thinks an additional 1.2 million to 1.8 million acre- feet could be yielded each year.

The study also estimates the capture of rainwater from urban roofsandpavedsurfaces inSouthernCaliforniaandtheSanFrancisco Bay Area could produce 420,000 to 630,000 acre-feet per year.

Gleick said he hopes the report will give policymakers a chance to consider investments that may be smarter than falling back on traditional approaches to increasing water supplies through dam construction and other major infrastructure projects.

“We do not say that capturing all thiswill be easy or fast. We do say that theseare thesmartest and fastest things we can do,” he said. “We’ve identified opportunities that maybe we’re overlooking.”

T.O. to consider groundwater

Import costs are increasing amid drought

By Teresa Rochester
Ventura County Star 6/10/2014

With imported-water costs climbing and a drought taking its toll on supply, Thousand Oaks officials want to look at a possible new source of water.

Actually, the new source isn't particularly new.

Groundwater was the sole source of the Conejo Valley's water supply until the late 1960s.

At Tuesday's City Council meeting, the council will be asked to sign off on a \$355,000 contract with a Los Angeles company to study the valley's groundwater to see whether it can be used once again, but this time to supplement imported water. Officials also are asking for a \$35,000 contingency fee.

The study will include potential groundwater sources in the Conejo Valley and evaluate quantity, quality, potential locations and treatment options, according to a report prepared for council.

Contractor CDM Smith Inc. will also study the feasibility of local supply options, which may include groundwater in the Conejo Valley, reclaimed water, stormwater capture and large industrial dischargers, the report says.

After years of reliance on local groundwater, levels were low by the early 1970s. Many wells were abandoned, though a few remain in service, including three owned by the city.

Reclaimed water is used on the east end of Thousand Oaks. It is provided through a joint powers authority between the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and Triunfo Sanitation District and Calleguas Municipal Water District.

The Hill Canyon Wastewater Treatment Plant generates reclaimed water used downstream by the Camarosa Water District.

CDM Smith's study will review groundwater data and examine options such as desalting groundwater for nonpotable and possibly potable uses.

The council will meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the Forum Theatre at the Civic Arts Plaza, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd.

On the Internet: <http://www.toaks.org>

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Also from the Supreme Court

POLLUTION

Families dealt blow on groundwater suit

WASHINGTON -The Supreme Court on Monday dealt a blow to North Carolina families trying to sue over groundwater contamination at a big Marine Corps base.

In a technical decision with real-world consequences, the court upheld North Carolina's limits on how long people have to bring certain pollution-related lawsuits. By upholding the state's 10-year limit, called a statute of repose, the court effectively undercut lawsuits centering on Camp Lejeune.

'Time is the controlling factor,' Justice Anthony Kennedy declared.

The immediate case decided Monday involved the CTS Corp., and not the Camp Lejeune groundwater contamination. The separate Camp Lejeune cases, though, will be affected by the ruling in the CTS case. That's because the North Carolina law starts a 10-year clock running from the last culpable act of the defendant - for instance, from when a company stops polluting or sells its property. After the clock runs out, lawsuits alleging injury from the contamination are banned. The residents' lawsuit over the former CTS Corp. land was filed in 2011, 24 years after the company sold the property.

Poll: Beneath Jerry Brown's high ratings, voters have reservations



San Quentin inmates walk around a cellblock. Forty-six percent disapproved of his record on prisons, compared with 30% who approved. (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

PHIL WILLON *contact the reporter*

PoliticsElectionsJerry BrownGovernment

Los Angeles Times 4/10/2014

Beneath Jerry Brown's high ratings, voters have reservations

Brown gets a 54% overall rating in poll, but ranks 39% on water policy and 30% on prisons

California voters overwhelmingly embraced Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown over his Republican rivals in the June primary, but he has failed to win them over on some of the state's most pressing issues.

Brown's handling of state prisons, efforts to address poverty and his response to California's drought and water issues all received low overall grades from voters in a USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times [poll](#) conducted shortly before the primary.

That discontent provides an opening for political newcomer Neel Kashkari, who will face Brown in November, to attack the Democratic governor.

"There are problems when you look under the hood," said Republican political consultant Michael Madrid, co-director of the poll, who expects Brown to be reelected. "There's a very good likelihood of a more substantive discussion of some of these than people think."

Though Brown received good marks on crime and public safety — 50%, up from 46% in November — he ranked lowest on prisons.

Forty-six percent disapproved of his record on prisons, compared with 30% who approved — nearly identical to the November findings.

The governor answered court orders to alleviate prison overcrowding partly by keeping tens of thousands of nonviolent felons in already packed county jails, forcing an increase in local inmates being released early. He has also begun releasing some offenders early from the prisons.

William Smylie, a county detention officer from Angels Camp in the Sierra foothills, said he has seen first-hand the problems caused by Brown's prison policies.

"There's a lot of people who aren't going to prison who should be.... They're filling county jails, and more are getting out," said Smylie, 43, a Democrat who took part in the poll. "I understand he had to do something. The prisons are overcrowded. But what he did was put a heavy burden on the counties."

Brown is known for his fiscal caution and has been criticized by some lawmakers and others who say his tightfistedness has undercut the state's ability to address basic needs of the 9 million Californians living in poverty — more than in any other state, according to census figures.

With state revenue on the rise, a growing number of Democrats argue that Brown must do more for those in need. Voters appear to agree: 45% of those polled disapproved of Brown's handling of poverty.

Deborah Crawford, a Republican from Mariposa, said she hears about the economy recovering but has not seen the poorest of the poor benefiting.

"I haven't seen any difference," said Crawford, 57, who used to work at Sears and is now on disability.

There are problems when you look under the hood. There's a very good likelihood of a more substantive discussion of some of these than people think.'- Michael Madrid, a Republican political consultant and co-director of the USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll

As drought grips the state, the governor also received low marks on water policy, with only 39% approval, weighted heavily by residents of the farm-rich Central Valley and California's northern interior. The response comes despite a \$687.4-million emergency drought relief package approved by the governor and Legislature earlier this year.

Robert Gates, a self-employed businessman from Santa Barbara, said Brown has done a good job overall but should be more aggressive about moving water from north to south.

"He needs to lead the charge against the environmental extremists who put a fish ... above an orchard or people," said Gates, 68, who is registered without a party preference and who voted for Brown in the primary. (Most respondents — 55% — opposed suspension of environmental regulations that protect fish and wildlife.)

Democratic consultant Matt Rodriguez, a co-director of the poll, noted that despite some deficiencies in the eyes of many voters, 54% approved of Brown's overall performance.

Voters see him as a "serious person in a serious time who has governed well," Rodriguez said. "I don't see a ton of vulnerability. I think there might be if there was someone who was more credible running against him."

Brown, 76, is running for a historic fourth term as California's governor, and has been a familiar face in California politics since the Los Angeles Rams played in the Coliseum and Richard Nixon was in the White House. Brown was first elected in 1974, serving two consecutive terms before his second act began with his election again in 2010.

For Kashkari, a former Goldman Sachs banker and U.S. Treasury official, the 2014 gubernatorial race is his first foray into politics.

Jerry Brown can be beat because the middle class is struggling, and he has no answers.- Neel Kashkari

Brown captured 54% of the vote in the June 3 primary election and has \$20.7 million socked away for his campaign. Kashkari received just under 20% of the vote and spent most of the \$4 million he gathered to beat Republican rival Tim Donnelly, a state assemblyman.

The governor said he delivered on campaign promises to mend the state's finances, require voter approval for any tax increase and give local government more authority — especially over schools and the incarceration of criminals.

"California has come a long way in the last few years," Brown told reporters on the night of the primary. "Californians appreciate living within our means, managing the people's money, creating a rainy-day fund and just bringing a very common sense, get-it-done kind of approach."

Kashkari began attacking Brown's record on poverty months ago.

"Jerry Brown can be beat because the middle class is struggling, and he has no answers," Kashkari said. "It's all about job creation. Once again, Democrats in Sacramento are looking for a Band-Aid rather than trying to address the disease."

Two of Kashkari's top priorities for "rebuilding the middle class" and alleviating poverty are cutting corporate taxes to attract new companies and opening California's Monterey Shale Formation to hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking.

Brown's campaign spokesman, Dan Newman, brushed aside Kashkari's criticisms, noting that the Republican ran the Bush administration's taxpayer-funded bank bailout.

"He's a guy who thinks Wall Street banks should have billions and the working poor should have a lower minimum wage," Newman said.

He added that the governor's focus on balancing the budget was the essential first step to addressing other needs in the state. A federal court order is forcing Brown to reduce inmate numbers, and the governor pushed for the drought-relief package, Newman said.

On poverty, he noted, in the last year Brown signed legislation to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour and proposed a budget to cover an unexpected rise in Medi-Cal enrollees — 1.4 million low-income people who may now receive healthcare.

"The governor's only vulnerability is misinformation," Newman said.

The poll was conducted jointly by American Viewpoint, a Republican firm, and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, a Democratic company, for the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and the Los Angeles Times. They surveyed 1,511 registered state voters by telephone from May 21 to May 28. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.



Farming in Fresno County. The governor received low marks on water policy, with only 39% approval, weighted heavily by residents of the farm-rich Central Valley and California's northern interior. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

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SPRINGS FIRE

Recovery in bloom

Young, native plants fighting weeds, drought to reclaim land

By Cheri Carlson
Ventura County Star 6/09/2014



Patrick Migliazzo, an intern with the National Park Service, waters native flora planted in an area charred by the Springs Fire in May 2013. Parks workers hope to restore the area to conditions before ranching and fires. PHOTOS BY DAVID YAMAMOTO/SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Small, dark patches of green grow mostly hidden in a field thick with yellow mustard flowers off Potrero Road in Newbury Park.

“To the untrained eye, it may not look like it’s very much at all,” said Irina Irvine, a restoration ecologist with the National Park Service.

But from fledgling coast live oak trees to flowering purple sage, the young native plants have rallied in Rancho Sierra Vista, part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

About 24,000 plants were put in over 9 acres near a dry creek bed near the Wendy Drive trailhead. But they are small, vastly outnumbered by weeds, like the mustard, and are trying to survive a drought along popular trails.

“A person who is not aware of what we’ve done here could just walk through and potentially (crush) all of the work that’s gone into this,” Irvine said.

She moved from spot to spot in an area marked with restoration signs, pointing out the small native plants that represent hundreds of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars.

After the Springs Fire burned nearly 70 percent of Rancho Sierra Vista in May 2013, the National Park Service established emergency restrictions to help protect the sensitive habitat, some of which had already been planted as part of the restoration.



Irina Irvine, a restoration ecologist with the National Park Service, holds one of thousands of cones used to hold new seedlings of native plants that were recently planted at Rancho Sierra Vista in Newbury Park. PHOTOS BY DAVID YAMAMOTO/SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The rules included requiring park-goers to stay on trails. While officials always urge people to stay on trails for safety and resource protection, the emergency restrictions have expired, officials said. Small areas like the restoration project near the Wendy Drive trailhead are still closed, and restrictions are still in place in the adjacent Point Mugu State Park.

Irvine said she needs the public's help to protect the plants trying to survive a wildfire and drought. If just one person goes off trail, a path will be created that others will follow.

"The faster these natives get big, the better chance the entire community will have to outcompete these grasses," Irvine said.

The plan is to help restore the area to what it was before years of ranching and fires, bringing back critical habitat for birds and other animals as well as plants less apt to catch and spread fires.

The wildfire was not the only challenge for the sensitive habitat. A restoration project in the middle of a drought can be tricky.

Irvine had thousands of plants grown from seed stock in 9-inch-long cones in the park nursery by fall 2013. They could not survive there forever and usually would be moved to the ground after a soaking rain. But the rain was a no-show.

"I was in a bit of a pickle," Irvine said. She waited and watched the forecasts. October passed. November turned into December, which turned into January. Still, the ground was dry, and the long-term forecast called for more of the same.

"I had 24,000 plants sitting in tiny, little cones," Irvine said. "I was staring down the barrel of all these plants dying."

She decided to stop waiting for rain. A team of volunteers spent January to March digging holes in the hard soil and planting.

"And then we got lucky. It rained," she said. It wasn't nearly enough, but it helped.

The plants have thrived despite the continued dry conditions, some doubling in size, Irvine said.

Now the park is in more of maintenance mode, weeding directly around natives and watering. About 1 more acre is left to be planted, part of the project funded with a grant from the National Park Service.



A *Phacelia grandiflora* blooms near a creekbed in an area charred by the Springs Fire in May 2013 as the National Park Service works to rehabilitate a 10-acre area of Rancho Sierra Vista in Newbury Park.



National Park Service contractor Fernando Magana pulls nonnative weeds such as this mustard weed to prevent them from competing with native flora.

County reshapes creek to reduce flood threat

ALICIA RUTLEDGE
EYE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Ventura County Star 6/08/2014

Imagine getting a loan to buy a home or business property, then being told later that it's in a Federal Emergency Management Agency flood zone, and if you want to continue living or doing business there, you have to pay for expensive flood insurance.

That's what happened to more than 900 home and business owners in Camarillo along Calleguas Creek between Pleasant Valley Road and U.S. Highway 101. In 2010, FEMA's redrawn 100-year flood maps took effect, which essentially means there is a 1 percent chance in any year that a flood could affect those properties.

The trouble is, there's no way to know which year it could happen, and if next year is particularly rainy, having the insurance policy would be a good thing.

On the other hand, wouldn't it be better to eliminate the possibility of flooding in the first place? That's what the Ventura County Public Works Agency's Watershed Protection District thought, and it embarked on a \$13 million, eight-year project aimed at flood control.

"We started looking at what we can do from a protection perspective, because insurance was going to be higher and flood protection was in everyone's best interest," said Jeff Pratt, director of the agency.

The project involved widening a narrow section of the creek by 90 feet, widening the rest of the creek between 156 to 300 feet, and lowering the bottom by 3 feet in depth. Two energydissipating drop structures were also constructed.

The project takes these 900 properties out of the flood zone, allowing them to stop paying for flood insurance. It also gives them peace of mind that they won't be inundated by floodwaters, whether it be next week or 70 years from now.

The district also wanted to keep its eye on the environment. Its strategy included keeping the creek looking as natural as possible. Instead of the wide, stark concrete passages found in many California flood-fighting structures, the district used a special concrete mix resembling natural soil and stone. It also preserved native vegetation wherever possible, including over half of the creek's west bank. The west side will also boast a pedestrian and bike trail, to be completed this year.

On April 25, Camarillo Mayor Kevin Kildee, county Supervisor Kathy Long and Pratt joined a crowd of appreciative residents and business owners at a ribbon-cutting, celebrating the project's completion.

The National Flood Insurance Program was created in 1968 to help property owners whose private insurance policies don't cover flooding, and since then, several reforms have taken place. On March 21, President Barack Obama signed the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act into law. Just like health insurance, certain homeowners are eligible for subsidized insurance policies. If your property has been mapped into a high-risk flood area since Oct. 1, 2008, you may be eligible for a cost-saving insurance extension.

Many flood-protection structures, such as levees, lose their effectiveness over time. It's up to local agencies, such as public works, to continually improve infrastructure. FEMA takes this into account each time maps are redrawn. You, the property owner, should maintain communication with these agencies so they are aware of any concerns you may have on issues affecting both public safety and increasing insurance rates.

On the Net: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>; http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/PUBLIC_WORKS Alicia Rutledge is a correspondent with Consortium Media, working under contract for the Ventura County Public Works Agency. Representatives of government or nonprofit agencies who want to submit articles on environmental topics for this column should contact David Goldstein at 658-4312 or david.goldstein@ventura.org.

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On the path to restoring river

Trail in county gets designation from government

By Anne Kallas Special to The Star
Ventura County Star 6/08/2014



Tom Weisel (second from left) gives Karen Bialobreski (from left), Karen Kaminsky, Paula Scott and Bruce Schoppe a guided tour during Saturday's celebration of National Trails Day. PHOTOS BY JUAN CARLO/ THE STAR

It's official. The Ventura River Trail has been designated one of 21 pathways in the United States to be a National Recreation Trail.

The designation by U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell was celebrated Saturday as part of the American Hiking Society's National Trails Day, which occurs the first Saturday of each June.

At the Big Rock Preserve just south of Foster Park, the Ventura Hillside Conservancy and the Friends of the Ventura River had a celebratory event where U.S. Rep. Julia Brownley, state Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson and state Assemblyman Das Williams converged to honor the achievement.

It's a big deal, according to Paul Jenkin, of Surfrider, a member organization of Friends of the Ventura River, which spearheaded the effort to coordinate the joint application by Ventura County and the city of Ventura for the designation.

"We hope this will make us eligible for more grant funds. We're now one of only about 1,200 trails in the United States that are put on a list of designated travel spots," Jenkin said. "We're really trying to shine a spotlight the importance of this river and watershed. It is our water supply and our life blood."

As part of the celebration, members of the Hillside Conservancy were leading tours of a nearby "swimming hole" that even during this drought-stricken time contains a generous pool of water where steelhead trout have been spotted.



a group waits along the Ventura river Trail to celebrate National Trails Day and the new federal designation for the trail. Photos by Juan Carlo/THE Star

Tom Weisel, of the conservancy, spoke to people tramping through the persistent and invasive arundo donax reeds and dodging patches of poison oak. He said the effort to create a 16-mile trail from Foster Park to the estuary at the mouth of the Ventura River near Highway 101 has benefited from the work of volunteers who regularly come out to clear plants and clean up trash.

Members of Ventura Girl Scout Troop 60718, were on hand to dig up weeds and continue the effort to clear the area.

"We try to do one project a month," said troop leader Jodie Argueta, of Ventura, as she led 11 Junior Girl Scouts ages 10-12.

Patrick Johnston, an outdoor recreation planner for the National Park Service, said the trail will be dotted with signs indicating the new designation.

"Only a small handful of recreational trails provide this connection with the outdoors," Johnson said.

Brownley said seeing the Girl Scouts out on a sunny day was a happy reminder.

"Like every day in Ventura County, it's a perfect day, a beautiful day and a wonderful hike," she said. "I'm proud to do my small part to establish this designation."

Jackson said the Girl Scouts reminded her of the ongoing efforts to restore the Ventura River for generations to come.

"The Girl Scouts remind me of how important the work of us grayhaired and notsograyhaired people is. These girls are working for our future," said Jackson, who



Derek Poultney (from left), Marci Higgins, and Linda Miramontes Gray sing the right-topassage song during Saturday's celebration of National Trails Day.

noted that many efforts to restore the river remain on hold, including the dismantling of Matilija Dam, and need to be continued "so we can restore the river to its early significance."

Ron Van Dyke, director of Ventura County Parks and Recreation, applauded the efforts of the Westside Ventura Community Council in being one of the originators of the effort to reconnect Venturans with the river that was essentially cut off from use by construction of Highway 33 to Casitas Springs.

"Two years ago, we got rid of a fish barrier at the San Antonio Creek," Van Dyke said. "The county is proud to sponsor and partner to connect people to be part of the trail."

Richard Bauleke, of Ventura, said he enjoys regularly volunteering to help with ongoing cleanups sponsored by the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy.

"It makes it nice. I like to come down and look at the progress being done," he said.

David Comden, who heads up the Hillsides Conservancy's board of trustees, reminded the more than 100 people gathered by the bike trail that the work is far from over. Receiving a check for \$8,000 for the conservancy from Sylvia Muñoz Schnopp, who was representing REI, an outdoor recreational equipment retailer, Comden said, "An effort like this needs money to move it along. It takes time. Time for the trees to grow; time for the animals to feel safe and return."



RIGHT: A bicyclist rides along the trail's bike path as Patrick Johnston (from left) gives David Comden, a plaque. Brian Brennan, Assemblyman Das Williams, state Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson and U.S. Rep. Julia Brownley applaud.

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For many, drought has little or no effect

Desire lacking for spending on fixes, poll finds

By Bettina Boxall Los Angeles Times
Ventura County Star 6/07/2014

LOS ANGELES — Most Californians surveyed say the statewide drought has had little or no effect on their daily lives, and a majority oppose the suspension of environmental protections or large-scale public spending to boost water supplies, a USC Dornsife/ Los Angeles Times poll has found.

Although 89 percent characterize the drought as a major problem or crisis, only 16 percent say it has affected them to a major degree.

Despite widespread news coverage of the drought — one of the worst in recent decades — the state's major population centers have largely escaped severe mandatory rationing. Even agriculture, which as California's biggest water user is hit the hardest by drought, has partially compensated for reduced water delivery by pumping more groundwater.

That has softened the drought's effect on many, apparently blunting the desire for drastic remedies and big spending on water projects.

While Central Valley congressmen and some agribusiness interests have blamed environmental regulations for worsening the water shortages, those polled cited a much broader range of causes. Topping the list was a lack of rain and snow and people using too much water, followed by insufficient storage and climate change.

"They're really blaming larger forces here," said David Kanevsky of American Viewpoint, the Republican firm that conducted the opinion survey with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, a Democratic firm. "What they don't want to see is quick fixes at the expense of the environment."

The survey showed strong support for water recycling, capturing stormwater, increasing underground storage, voluntary conservation and seawater desalination. A smaller percentage, though still a majority, favored building new dams and reservoirs.

But when it comes to paying for the projects, the numbers flipped. Only 36 percent want to improve storage and delivery systems by spending public money.

Land bought to save aquifer

Groups pool resources for purchase

By Carol Lawrence
Ventura County Star 6/07/2014



PHOTO COURTESY OJAI VALLEY LAND CONSERVANCY

To end threats of development that could affect the drinking water supply for several hundred residents, the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and shareholders of the Senior Canyon Mutual Water Co. joined forces to buy a critical chunk of watershed land.

The nonprofit conservancy, which protects critical land through purchases and agreements, paid \$75,000 on May 28 for 160 forested acres in The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and shareholders of the Senior Canyon Mutual Water Co. have joined forces to buy a 160-acre parcel of watershed land to keep drinking water supplies safe from development.

Ventura County with half its own funds and half donated by members who own shares in the small, nonprofit water company.

Greg Gamble, the conservancy's executive director, called the parcel "extremely important" for residents of the Ojai Valley's east end. Underground aquifers in the 160 acres store rainwater that falls there and are the only drinking water source for those residents, he said.

"It's been a critical watershed for us in the Ojai Valley and will continue to be so for us in coming years," Gamble said, particularly during the drought.

The conservancy bought the land at auction after the court system took back the land from the private landowners, Gamble said.

While the court system has prohibited legal and public access to the land, "it's conceivable a court decision would be reversed," he said.

That's what the water company shareholders also feared, and they put out the money to end the chance of development once and for all, said Peter Thielke, president of the company's board. Developers had set their sights on the property in previous years, he

said.

“Each time, a legal challenge had to be mounted, which was expensive,” Thielke said, requiring money the water company doesn’t have.

“It guarantees in perpetuity that the land will remain as it is now,” he said of the purchase.

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Small leaks can add up to big water losses



Use Teflon tape for plumbing to repair any leaks or seeps in your drip system couplers.
Maureen Gilmer/MCT Yardsmart

Ventura County Star 6/07/2014

I always dreamed of the self sufficiency of a well, so when I bought my remote Sierra Mountain home the wish came true. That is until I returned from a trip to find the well had inexplicably quit. Before I could wash, flush, drink or do laundry, I had to call in the experts to diagnose the well failure. Invariably I'd have to pull the pump from the four hundred foot deep well. Such great depth requires a boom truck at a thousand dollars a day to lift the pipes and submersible pump out of the hole, one twenty foot segment at a time. Then if pipes, wires or pump needed replacement, I'd fork over another thousand. Three or four days later, if I was lucky, the pump was back in the ground doing its job.

When you live on a well that barely delivers five gallons per minute, you learn how to conserve water. I developed a sixth sense, one acutely aware of the sound of water moving in the pipes when it shouldn't be. I also discovered many ways that standard outdoor plumbing can be the source of very small leaks which, over days, weeks and even months, result in substantial water losses.

If nothing in the house was drawing this flow, then I went outside to find the source. Maybe there was a hose left running or PVC pipe cracked SOMEWHERE underground. On these forays I'd inevitably find small leaks which can be easily repaired to stop the perpetual drips.

In an epic drought like this rainless year in the West, every one of us should behave as though we have a 400 foot well. Know how it sounds indoors when the water lines are active outside, and when they're not.

Summers in the inland west are dry, so anything made of rubber or plastic inside a valve degrades very quickly. It pays to go through your system checking for signs of leaks at the most common points: valves, faucets and couplers.

Here's how:

- Check faucets for leaks. Inside an outdoor faucet is a rubber gasket that dries out and may even crack over the years. When this happens it leaks even when it's closed.

Replace or repair any outdoor faucet where there's evidence of moisture.

- Irrigation valve seating. Whether manual or automatic, check your sprinkler valves for leaking. Sometimes you'll find a perpetually wet area around the lowest lying head on that line. This indicates the valve isn't seating properly so water is seeping into the lines to collect at the low point. Since it's hard to repair the internal parts of this valve, it's best to replace it with a new one.
- Hose couplers and washers. Every hose begins with a female coupler which contains a soft rubber washer that prevents leaking at these connections. Make a point of buying new washers to replace all the old ones this year. While you're at it, note any cracks or tears in your hoses. If they can't be repaired, replace with a new hose.
- Use a water wand. The benefit of a water wand is that it allows you to turn off the water without going back to the faucet. If the kids, the phone or a delivery demands immediate attention, simply switch off the wand so you won't lose a drop.
- Timer on every hose bib. Forgetting a running hose is a major source of water waste. The best way to prevent this is to purchase a timer for all your hose bibs. This ensures the water is turned off even if you forget to do so.

Before you make big changes to your landscaping for improved water conservation, make sure you attend to the little things first. These improvements are affordable and possible for anyone to accomplish. Above all remember that the smallest leaks if undetected over time, add up to big water loss. (Maureen Gilmer is an author, horticulturist and landscape designer. Learn more at www.MoPlants.com. Contact her at mogilmer@yahoo.com or P. O. Box 891, Morongo Valley, CA 92256. Distributed by MCT Information Services)



Maureen
Gilmer

Anything but dry: Couple go beyond the lawn in saving water

By Nicole Gregory
The Orange County Register
Ventura County Star 6/07/2014



Homeowners Ann and Craig Rice, background, enjoy their front yard wonderland of succulents, cactuses, hills, valleys, sculptures, exotic stones and stream. Craig's friend of 40 years, landscape designer/artist Jay Blair Ebbert, transformed their flat, all-grass yard into a striking, one-of-a-kind hill and valley oasis in five months. Photos by Cindy Yamanaka/The Orange County Register/MCT

An idea was taking shape in Jay Blair Ebbert's mind.

His longtime good friends Ann and Craig Rice had a modest, comfortable home with a small yard in Orange that pretty much fit in with the other modest, comfortable homes with small yards nearby.

But Craig was starting to worry about water shortages and wanted to replace the grass in the yard with drought-tolerant plants. Ann was doubtful.

That set Ebbert to thinking. "I had a couple of years to sit and look at their yard, and think about what I wanted to do," Ebbert said. So by the time Ann and Craig were ready to change the yard, Ebbert had the whole plan for their landscape figured out.

"I didn't even draw on it on paper—it was all in my head," he said.

It would make Craig and Ann's house stand out in the neighborhood—that was for sure.

Ebbert, 58, is an artist and self-taught landscape designer with many skills and talents. At one time, he made money building custom pools across Orange County, but when the economy nose-dived, that business ended and he had to find something new.

He's an out-of-the-box thinker who knows how to transform plain landscapes into

wonderlands of slopes, pathways, water features, cactuses, succulents and rocks.

Ebbert's eyes light up when he talks about a Madagascar palm that bursts forth with white blooms in the spring. He loves rocks and spends a lot of time choosing the right ones for the right spots. He observes a space for hours and days in different kinds of light so he can imagine just the right shapes for it.

"I'm passionate; it just comes down to that," Ebbert said. He remembers working side by side with his father creating landscapes of all the homes he lived in with his parents.

Although he had some interruptions, the whole project took seven months. The reaction of his friends? "They love it," Ebbert said. (Distributed by MCT Information Services.)



Homeowner Ann Rice's front yard is a standout in an Orange neighborhood of wellmanicured lawns. She crosses a bridge above a river.

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News in Brief

Judge Denies Injunction Against Water District Storage Tank

The request by a homeowner for a Preliminary Injunction to stop construction of a 5-million gallon storage tank at Las Virgenes Reservoir in Westlake Village was denied at a LA Superior Court hearing Wednesday, June 4. Judge Joanne B. O'Donnell ruled in favor of the District on all points and approved the project to proceed. She found that the District followed the proper process to approve the project, the process provided ample opportunity for the public to be heard, and delay of the project would pose increased fire risk to the area due to insufficient fire flow and also noted the District performed a "thoughtful assessment" of the Valley Fever risk and no credible evidence was presented to substantiate that alleged threat. As a result, the District continues to move ahead with the project, which is nearly 30% complete. "We're pleased the court confirmed the District followed a rigorous public process allowing ample opportunity for public input on the project," said David W. Pedersen, LVMWD's General Manager.

Valley News Group, June 5, 2014

DROUGHT FACTOIDS

2013 WAS THE DRIEST YEAR ON RECORD.

SIERRA SNOWPACK 18% OF NORMAL ON MAY 1.

MANY CENTRAL VALLEY FARMS UNABLE TO PLANT CROPS.

ALMOND, AVOCADO AND CITRUS ORCHARDS AT RISK.

FOOD PRICES EXPECTED TO INCREASE.

SAVING WATER MAKES A DIFFERENCE



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Valley News Group, June 5, 2014



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Valley News Group, June 5, 2014