

# NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public Outreach**

Organized by date

## AGRICULTURE

# New water rules ready

### *Farmers to get briefed on allotments*

By Gretchen Wenner  
Ventura County Star 6/27/2014

With the ongoing drought and new groundwater rules looming, Oxnard Plain farmers are facing big changes.

A new reporting system that could fundamentally alter how growers plan operations was part of the emergency pumping restriction ordinance adopted in April by regulators.

Starting in August, all agricultural users in the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency's territory must report pumping based on crops grown, soil conditions and other factors.

To help farmers learn the new system, the agency will hold a training event from 9-11 a.m. July 10 in the second-floor multipurpose room of the Ventura County Administrative Center, 800 S. Victoria Ave., Ventura.

"It is absolutely recommended they come," said Jeff Pratt, Ventura County's public works director, who also serves as the groundwater agency's executive officer.

There's a lot to learn, Pratt said, and the agency originally hoped there would be more time for the transition.

"Now we're in an accelerated framework," he said.

The crop and soil information will determine baseline allotments that, if exceeded, would mean financial penalties for excess pumping.

It's a sea change for many who have relied on historically granted amounts as a baseline.

The new rules are part of the framework of Emergency Ordinance E. They were developed with the input of agricultural users who said earlier versions of the ordinance penalized growers who had invested in efficient irrigation systems and those with trees and other crops that cannot easily be fallowed.

Overall, the ordinance aims to reduce pumping in the district 20 percent by summer 2015.

John Mathews, general counsel for the Pleasant Valley County Water District, said most of his growers have no experience with the new system, known as the irrigation allowance index.

“It may not be that difficult — I don’t know,” he said. But Pleasant Valley has asked for training to help with the shift.

There are still unanswered questions, some of which surfaced during a brief discussion at the Fox Canyon board meeting Wednesday. Some wondered whether allowed amounts are annual caps, for example, or a per-crop figure.

For Mathews, whether the rules apply only to groundwater or also include surface supplies is unclear.

“Our situation is very different from most growers,” he said. Pleasant Valley farmers use a mix of surface water, district supplies and private wells. From Mathews’ point of view, Fox Canyon has jurisdiction only over groundwater.

“That’s one of the areas we want to discuss,” he said.

Call the groundwater agency at 654-2104 or visit <http://www.fcgma.org> for more information on the July meeting.

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## WATER

# Bill grants well access

*Under plan, county farmers may get scrutiny*

By Timm Herdt  
Ventura County Star 6/27/2014

**SACRAMENTO** — A bill that would give local authorities the ability to obtain a warrant to inspect water wells on the Oxnard Plain was sent to Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday.

The measure, Senate Bill 988 by Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara, would grant authority to the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency to inspect meters on the wells of those who pump from overdrafted aquifers.

In some areas, the water level has dropped so low that the basins are increasingly threatened by seawater intrusion.

The agency now relies on self-reported data from pumpers. The accuracy of the well meters has become more critical in the wake of the agency's action this spring to reduce pumping by 20 percent. Stiff financial penalties will be imposed on pumpers who exceed their baseline allotment.

Most of the wells in the agency's jurisdiction belong to farmers, but some are also operated by the cities of Oxnard, Ventura and Camarillo.

Under the bill, the agency would be allowed to inspect meters of landowners who voluntarily allow inspectors onto their property. If a landowner does not cooperate, the agency would be authorized to obtain an inspection warrant to gain access to the property.

"Without this bill, the agency will not have sufficient authority to carry out its job," said Assemblyman Das Williams, D Santa Barbara, in presenting the measure to the Assembly.

The bill was approved 56-18, with Republican Katcho Achadjian, of San Luis Obispo, joining majority Democrats in support. Ventura County's two GOP Assembly members, Scott Wilk and Jeff Gorell, did not vote. Wilk abstained, while Gorell had an excused absence. He is in Washington, D.C., this week attending events for GOP congressional candidates.

Brown's office does not indicate in advance how the governor intends to act on specific bills, but his signature on the measure is expected. His administration is seeking to beef up groundwater monitoring, and he pledged in his State of the State address this year

that “serious groundwater management” must be part of California’s response to the drought.

Water experts in Ventura County have warned that steps must be taken to reduce pumping from an interconnected web of aquifers that stretch from the Oxnard shore to Moorpark. It is estimated that about 25,000 acrefeet more water is being pumped each year from the basins than is sustainable. That amount is the equivalent of the water used by all households in the city of Ventura every year.

Jackson represents western Ventura County in the Senate, where the measure was approved last month on a vote of 27-8.

After the bill is delivered to his office, Brown will have to act on it within 12 days.

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# Water rates trend upward

By Sylvie Belmond

The Acorn 6/26/2014 Front Page

Water and sewer rates will continue their upward trend for customers in the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

LVMWD officials approved a \$76.2-million budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year, which starts July 1.

The new budget provides funding for LVMWD's potable water, sanitation, wastewater treatment and recycled water distribution, officials said.

A three-year rate schedule adopted in 2012 is entering its final year of planned increases.

"( Some customers) were paying less than it costs for the district to provide the water, so this year we will be catching up," district spokesperson Jeff Reinhardt said.

Potable water rates will go up on Jan. 1, 2015, with an additional 8 cents per billing unit, reflecting cost increases from LVMWD's wholesale supplier, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

One billing unit equals 100 cubic feet, or 748 gallons.

Under the tiered use plan, the projected tier 1 cost per billing unit would rise from \$2.19 to \$2.31; tier 2 from \$2.60 to \$2.80; tier 3 from \$3.56 to \$3.81; and tier 4 from \$5.02 to \$5.34.

The new budget includes operating expenses of \$50.4 million. The largest single expense is for wholesale potable water purchases—\$25.5 million.

Capital improvement costs are estimated at \$23 million. Some of the work will be funded through an account that was set aside to maintain and improve infrastructure.

Work continues on the potable water infrastructure, which includes a 5-million-gallon tank under construction at Las Virgenes Reservoir in [Westlake Village](#), the refurbishment of a water tank in [Calabasas](#), and continued installation of automated meters throughout the district.

In the recycled water and wastewater treatment enterprises, priority projects include extension of recycled water mains, rehabilitation work at the Tapia Water Reclamation and Rancho Las Virgenes Composting facilities, and the lining of a reservoir.

Earlier this month, a Joint Powers Authority consisting of LVMWD and Triunfo Sanitation District approved a \$22.6-million budget to pay for wastewater operations at the Tapia sewer plant.

Effective July 1, sanitation rates will increase from a current maximum of \$108.56 every two months for a single-family home to \$110.74. The sanitation rates for multifamily dwellings will go from \$68.59 to \$69.97.

Future wastewater treatment costs for the Tapia facility may rise in order to comply with new water quality standards adopted for Malibu Creek by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the L.A. Regional Water Quality Control Board, LVMWD General Manager David Pedersen said. The new standards are being challenged in federal court.

### **Salaries and benefits**

The district has 117 positions with four vacancies. There are four bargaining units and a handful of non-union employees, including a human resources manager and the general manager.

The Service Employees International Union represents the two largest groups, covering 81 employees through an existing agreement. Negotiations with SEIU are expected later this year.

Recently, LVMWD negotiated changes in which some employees pay a share of their retirement contribution in exchange for a salary increase. Nonunion employees now pay a 7 percent pension contribution in exchange for a 6 to 7 percent raise, depending on the bargaining unit, Reinhardt said.

Additionally, the district's maximum contribution to healthcare was reduced by about \$300 per employee per month.

"The goal of having employees' contributions reflected in their salaries was to allow for greater transparency of true compensation and in support of pension reform," Reinhardt said.

In a related action, the water district board authorized a prepayment of \$1.7 million for the annual required contribution to the CalPERS employee retirement system. The early payment results in a savings of about \$63,000, Pedersen said.

Boardmember Barry Steinhardt worried about salaries on the rise at the water district.

Steinhardt also said the district is spending too much money on superfluous capital improvements.

In addition to building a large tank in the [Westlake Village](#) Three Springs Neighborhood, another 8.5 million gallons of potable water storage is being proposed for an undetermined location.

“These are solutions to problems that don’t exist,” Steinhardt said.

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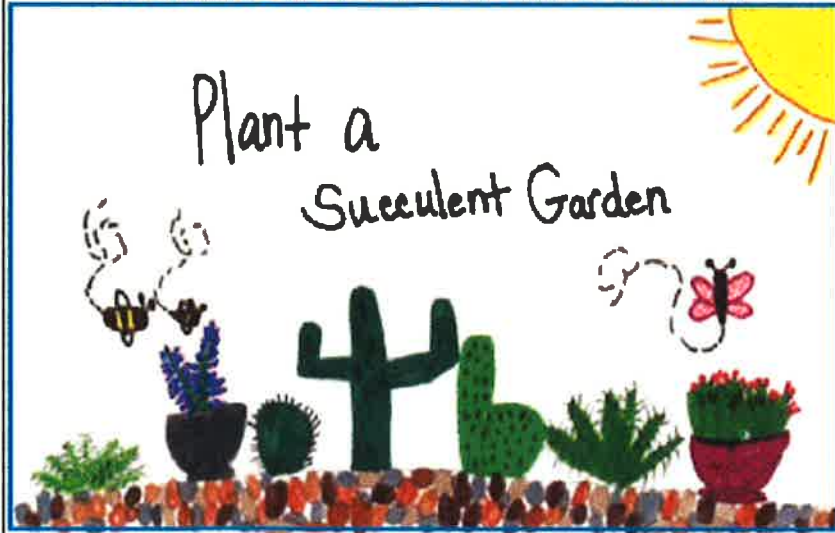


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Letters

## Solar still

John and Michele McMullen, Oxnard  
Ventura County Star 6/26/2014

California water shortage? Maybe not. We have all the water we could ever possibly use in the Pacific Ocean. It's just too salty to drink.

How can we convert that salty water into drinkable water and other nonsaline uses? Well, there's reverse osmosis (RO). Water produced by RO uses huge amounts of electricity, depending upon salinity, the saltier the water the higher the cost.

It costs about \$2,000 to produce an acre foot of potable (drinkable) water from seawater. It costs \$1,000 for an acre foot of the water we currently use in our homes today. How can we reduce the cost of converting seawater? What about an industrialize solar still? Or several large solar stills constructed in the desert near Mojave close to the wind turbines that produce electrical power? Solar still technology has been in use for thousands of years, is very simple and is very low tech.

It's also very efficient and cost effective. So the idea is to pump seawater to a desert location where there's lots of sunlight and usable space. After converting the seawater into potable water, using the sun as the energy source, it is then pumped to the California Aqueduct where it is discharged into the existing distribution network.

Electricity to pump the water could be provided by a windpowered generating facility or solar arrays, mitigating our carbon footprint.

How about another product of the solar still — sea salt? Sea salt will be produced naturally by the solar still(s) and appears very marketable, just look in your local grocery store or online and discover the popularity of sea salt.

Some of the hurdles are: Determination as to whether quantity and quality warrant; initiating the project; land availability; habitat disruption; construction and operation costs; and funding.

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## Bill aimed at speedier teacher firings among those signed by Brown



California's finances have improved enough to receive a credit upgrade from Moody's, a Wall Street ratings agency. Gov. Jerry Brown, pictured here with state lawmakers, signed a new budget into law last week. (Gregory Bull / Associated Press)

PATRICK MCGREEVY

LA TIMES 6/26/2014

Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday signed legislation aimed at speeding the dismissal of public school teachers for gross misconduct, a bill in reaction to a sex abuse case at Miramonte Elementary School in Los Angeles.

The measure was introduced after teacher Mark Berndt was arrested in 2012 and charged with 23 counts of lewd conduct. The Los Angeles Unified School District said red tape in the firing process was responsible for the district paying \$40,000 to the teacher to drop his appeal of his firing.

Appeals of firings that now can take more than a year would be expedited under the new law.

A teacher accused of the most egregious misconduct, including sex abuse, child neglect and drug crimes, would be given 30 days after being fired to seek an independent hearing, which would then have to start within 60 days.

The hearing would be overseen by an administrative law judge, not a three-person panel, and the decision would be binding.

"We all agree that the current dismissal appeal process takes too long and costs too much money," said Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo), who introduced AB 215. "The only ones who benefit are attorneys."

The measure was supported by the California Teachers Assn., but the Assn. of California School Administrators and Los Angeles schools Supt. John Deasy opposed the measure.

The administrators' group worried the tight deadlines could create obstacles to firing teachers and the definition of egregious conduct was too narrow, excluding crimes including armed robbery and aggravated assault, according to Naj Alikahn, a spokesman for the association.

"The bill is not everything that we wanted but it is a start," said Los Angeles school board member Tamar Galatzan.

The new law also allows evidence older than four years to be used in cases of alleged sexual misconduct.

"The governor signed AB 215 to improve the dismissal process in California," said Jim Evans, a Brown spokesman.

In all, the governor signed 17 bills into law Wednesday, with most taking effect Jan. 1.

Brown also approved a measure aimed at helping California's burgeoning private space industry by strengthening the liability waiver signed by spaceflight passengers. The new law builds on a limited liability measure approved in 2012 by the Legislature for commercial space ventures.

"Clarifying and strengthening the current waiver required by federal and state law is one small step in the right direction to support the commercial space industry," said Sen. Steve Knight (R-Palmdale), who introduced SB 415.

Other bills signed Wednesday would:

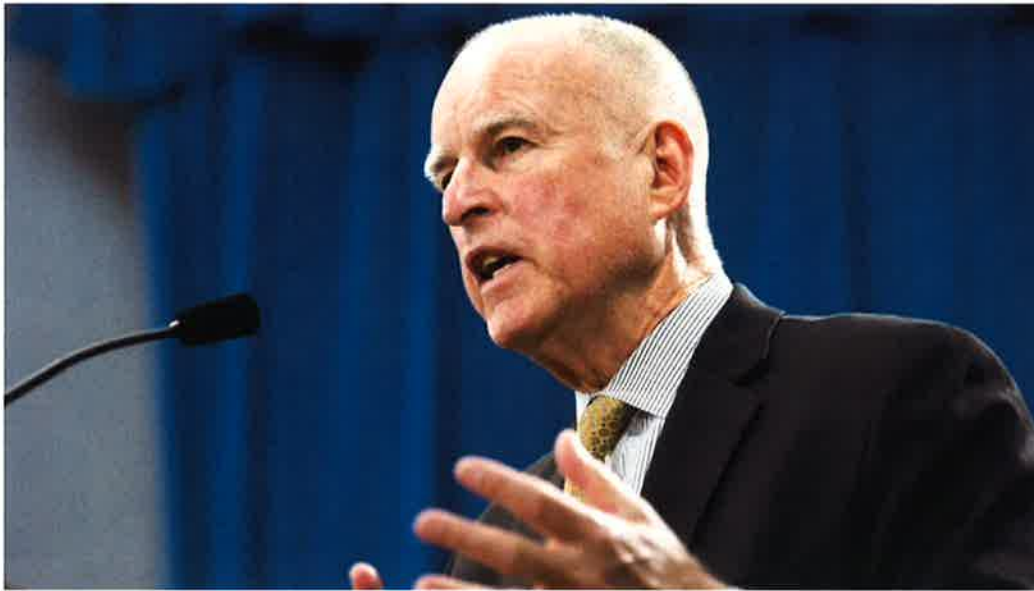
- Allow community college districts, through their governing boards, to contract for shuttle services on campuses paid for by a fee to all students if the action is approved by a majority of the students.
- Increase the maximum horsepower allowed for electric scooters and mopeds from two to four after makers of the machines said they needed more power for safety on hills to keep pace with automobile traffic.
- Permit the Los Angeles County Fair to conduct horse races at Los Alamitos Race Course.

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## Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal intensifies water bond negotiations



Some groups are wary of Gov. Jerry Brown's reduced water bond package. His \$6-billion plan is far less than the \$11-billion bond currently scheduled for the November ballot. (Randy Pench / MCT)

### MELANIE MASON

LA Times 6/26/2014

Gov. Jerry Brown's call for a drastically cheaper water bond set off a fresh round of negotiations in the Capitol on Wednesday, as lawmakers and stakeholders seek to craft a plan that addresses the state's myriad water needs without a bloated price tag.

Brown's \$6-billion bond proposal, which was fleshed out in greater detail Wednesday, marks a significant step up in the governor's engagement with the effort to pass a water bond to replace the \$11.1-billion measure now on the November ballot.

The negotiations are much more serious now than they were before.- Executive director of the Assn. of California Water Agencies Timothy Quinn

"The negotiations are much more serious now than they were before," said Timothy Quinn, executive director of the Assn. of California Water Agencies. Before Brown weighed in, "we weren't getting anywhere.... We were waiting for the governor to show his hand — and now he has."

Many parties involved are smarting from the slashed price tag. Alternative proposals moving through the Legislature this year have ranged from \$8 billion to \$10.5 billion.

"A lot of stakeholders are jumping up and down very unhappy that it's \$6 billion because it doesn't provide enough. I agree," said Mario Santoyo, executive director of the California Latino Water Coalition. "But let's not start getting the torches out here yet. Let's start working and negotiating and get it to a better place."

According to a blueprint circulated to interested parties, Brown's proposal would include \$1.5 billion for water quality and supply reliability projects, including water conservation, wastewater treatment and groundwater cleanup. The latter is a top priority for the Los Angeles region, where lawmakers are seeking to clean up the contaminated San Fernando Basin.

"As a Los Angeles-area lawmaker, I want to make sure we're able to clean up our region's abundant groundwater," said Assemblyman Mike Gatto (D-Los Angeles). "As a Californian, I recognize how good for the rest of the state it would be if Los Angeles doesn't have to import as much water."

Brown's proposal would also put \$2 billion toward storage projects, such as dams and reservoirs. Republicans and some Central Valley Democrats say that figure is too low. The water bond on the ballot has \$3 billion designated for storage.

Assemblyman Frank Bigelow (R-O'Neals), who met with the governor Tuesday, said he told Brown that a bond pruned to \$6 billion "would be very difficult for us to attain." Nevertheless, he said, he believed that Brown was "very firm" in keeping the bond's price tag low, in hopes of not adding too much to the state's debt load.

Bigelow said he agreed with the governor's concerns about debt. But "we are going into one of the worst droughts ever. We are facing uncertainty with the ability to provide water to the different components of this state," he said.

"We need to invest in the infrastructure of the state. I think we can do it and do it prudently and effectively," he said.

Quinn agreed that the drought might make voters more inclined to support a larger bond.

"But the drought has not gotten rid of skepticism of the voters of government waste," he said. "Everything you can do to protect yourself against that helps. The person voters view as their knight in shining armor [against waste] is Gov. Jerry Brown."

Brown also conveyed to lawmakers Tuesday that he had concerns with the 2009 bond now scheduled for this year's ballot. The governor's opposition could further damage that measure's prospects, which are already teetering under criticism that it is laden with earmarks.

But supporters of a larger bond have not abandoned the possibility of keeping the old measure alive.

"My hope is that we'll work something out with the governor. But if that fails to occur, there's no question that a number of stakeholders will push hard for the '09 to be viable on the ballot," said Santoyo, whose group helped negotiate the measure.

Also noteworthy is Brown's desire to disassociate the bond from his plan to build two enormous tunnels under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to transport water farther south. The question of how the bond may advance that project has been one of the thorniest issues in the Legislature's negotiations.

Still, some Delta interests are skeptical that Brown's plan would be "tunnel neutral."

"I don't think it's real," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, whose group Restore the Delta opposes the tunnels. She noted that Brown's proposal would put money toward water-related habitat protection, which she said could go toward ecological restoration central to the tunnel project.

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## Local California Politics

# California lawmakers should not procrastinate on water plan



Irrigated fields near Chico in the Sacramento Valley. (Brian van der Brug, Los Angeles Times)

### George Skelton

LOS ANGELES TIMES 6/26/2014

[george.skelton@latimes.com](mailto:george.skelton@latimes.com)

How soon people forget: One spring day just three years ago so much water was rampaging down the Sacramento River nobody knew where to put it.

All reservoirs up and down the Central Valley were full.

Oh, if only there was more storage space, Sacramento Republicans cried. Darned anti-dam liberals. Tree-hugging environmentalists.

Roughly four acre-feet of water — enough to supply eight families for a year — was tumbling past the state capital every second. All this water was rolling through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta into San Francisco Bay and out the Golden Gate to sea.

All the water was not wasted, of course. Much of it was — always is — needed to flush out the delta, push back salinity and carry salmon to the ocean where they generate a valuable and iconic coastal fishing industry. But not that much water.

A bunch should have been stashed for the inevitable next drought — for the 24 million people who rely on the delta for drinking water and farmers who use it to irrigate 3 million acres.

Now fast forward to Monday in the state Senate.

Up for a vote was a proposed \$10.5-billion water bond that contained \$3 billion for dam-building. It was a particularly generous offer for the reservoir beneficiaries.

The borrowed \$3 billion — repaid by taxpayers through the state's general fund — would have covered up to half the cost of a dam project. The rest would have been paid for by the beneficiaries — the water consumers — through higher monthly rates. Historically, the beneficiaries have footed 90% or more of such costs.

But no Republican senator voted for the bond. It needed a two-thirds majority and fell five votes short at 22, all supplied by Democrats.

Suddenly, reservoirs — "surface storage" in water lingo — ranked No. 2 in Republican priorities behind something called BDCP. It stands for Bay Delta Conservation Plan and has become a euphemism for tunnels.

The \$26-billion BDCP, a product of state government and large water districts, contains two elements. One is a \$15-billion twin tunnel project — each tunnel 35 miles long, 40 feet wide — beneath the delta to siphon fresh Sacramento River water. The second is \$11 billion for ecological restoration and operating costs; the former necessary to attain government permits for tunnel digging.

The tunnels themselves would be paid for by water users through higher rates. The delta restoration would be footed by all taxpayers via bonds.

San Joaquin Valley farmers, especially, are desperate for the delta water and are pushing for the tunnels. So is the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Gov. Jerry Brown sees the big pipes as a legacy builder.

Delta farmers, naturally, are fighting the tunnels. They don't want to lose their fresh water and have their land mucked up by the massive tunnel boring. They're supported by many environmentalists.

So the overriding issue for Republicans in Monday's bond vote was not water storage, but whether the proposal would help or hurt the tunnel effort — whether it would fund the type of restoration projects that would lead to the digging permits. Taking their cue from water districts, the GOP lawmakers decided it wouldn't.

The bond, by Delta Sen. Lois Wolk (D-Davis), was advertised as "tunnel neutral." But Republicans didn't trust the neutrality.

"You can't have both storage and tunnels" in a bond, Senate leader Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) told Republicans during the floor debate. "This is your last chance to grab \$3 billion for storage."

Steinberg appears to have been correct. One day later, Brown emphatically poured cold water all over the \$3 billion idea.

Finally weighing in on the issue, Brown privately told legislators that he preferred only \$2 billion for storage. And the total bond shouldn't exceed \$6 billion. The bond would go on the November ballot.

The governor — running for reelection in November as a prudent skinflint — also raised the possibility of offering voters a second, smaller \$2-billion water bond in 2016, legislators reported.

But the most important information Brown privately gave the lawmakers, Oracle-like, is that if it's on the ballot, he'll oppose an old \$11.1-billion water bond the Legislature passed in 2009. Lawmakers previously yanked that off two ballots because it reeks so strongly of pork that it's deemed not passable.

Many Republicans and water districts have been hoping — dreaming — that Californians would hold their noses against the smelly pork and vote for the '09 bond anyway because we're in a historic drought. That proposal also includes \$3 billion for water storage and is considered pro-tunnel.

But Brown awakened them Tuesday. That bond almost certainly will be pulled off the ballot again and this time probably buried for good.

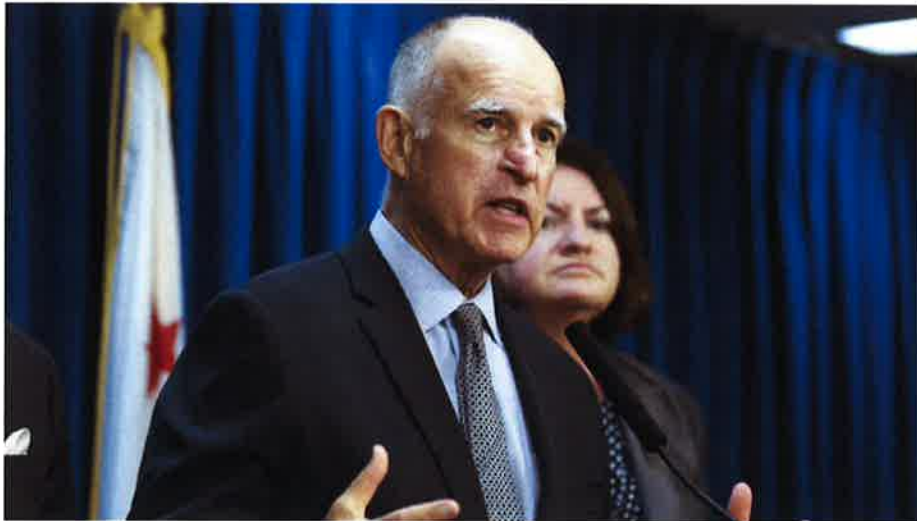
Now the Capitol politicians face serious compromising. Failure to agree on a water plan while farm fields are being fallowed and homeowners are letting their lawns die could be very embarrassing.

"We need to put something on the ballot, something that's palpable to all the disparate interests up and down the state," says new Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins (D-San Diego). "All have to feel they have skin in the game."

There's much more at stake than tunnels and dams. All the bond proposals floating around would also fund such worthy local projects as drinking water purification, storm water capturing, aquifer recharging, watershed restoration, recycling and desalination.

Leaders want to reach a deal before the lawmakers head out on vacation July 3. My suggestion: Lock the Capitol doors until they get it done. Otherwise, they still may be procrastinating during the next flood.

# Gov. Jerry Brown presses for scaled-back, \$6-billion water bond



California Gov. Jerry Brown, left, met Tuesday with legislative leaders on a proposed water bond measure. (Gregory Bull / AP)

MELANIE MASON, PATRICK MCGREEVY *contact the reporters*

LA TIMES 6/25/2014

Gov. Jerry Brown told legislative leaders Tuesday he wants a \$6-billion water bond to be put before voters in November--a substantially lower price tag than proposals making their way through the Legislature.

Brown also made clear that he has concerns with the \$11.1-billion bond currently set to go before voters in November, according to people familiar with the conversations. That bond, originally written in 2009, would direct \$3 billion for storage projects. But opposition from Brown could seriously harm its prospects if it remained on the ballot.

According to legislative sources, Brown indicated he would want one-third of the bond--\$2 billion--for water storage. Republicans and Central Valley Democrats had wanted at least \$3 billion for storage projects such as dams and reservoirs, which are a top priority for agriculture interests.

Lawmakers have been floating a number of proposals to replace the current bond. One \$10.5-billion proposal by Sen. Lois Wolk (D-Davis) failed to get the two-thirds vote needed to advance in the Senate on Monday.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), who had warned Republicans that Monday may be their last chance to vote on a proposal with \$3 billion

in storage, said Tuesday that he and Speaker Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) had a "very good, positive conversation" with the governor Tuesday.

"I would describe it as progress," Steinberg said. "We were talking about the big picture."

Steinberg said that despite the stalled vote on Monday, the debate on the Wolk bond "energized the conversation."

Now, in 24 hours, we're making progress," he said.

The governor's office declined to comment on the details emerging Tuesday. Spokesman Jim Evans said that regarding the size of the bond, "the governor is concerned about ongoing debt service and its impact on future budgets."

The Legislature needs some Republican support to provide the two-thirds vote needed to put a new water bond on the November ballot to replace an \$11.1-billion measure already there but that supporters fear will not win voter support.

In addition to meeting with Democratic legislative leaders, Brown also had discussions Tuesday with Senate GOP leader Bob Huff (R-Diamond Bar), Sen. Anthony Cannella (R-Ceres) and Sen. Tom Berryhill (R-Modesto), and in a separate meeting, with Assembly Republican leader Connie Conway (R-Tulare) and Assemblyman Frank Bigelow (R-O'Neals).

On Tuesday, a spokesman for Huff confirmed that Republicans were willing to negotiate.

"We appreciate the governor's direct engagement in this process, as he's been silent until now," said spokesman Peter DeMarco. "All parties understand that time is short and discussions are ongoing; we believe a solution can be found that meets California's immediate and long-term needs."

The \$10.5-billion bond proposed by Wolk "abandoned the statewide approach to improving water management," DeMarco said.

"Any water bond must give equal balance to expanding California water storage, protecting the environment, moving the water from where it is captured to where it is needed, and helping provide a more reliable and safe water supply for every resident," DeMarco said.

# Water bond stalls in Senate

*Possibility of tunnels poses risk of state rift*

By Timm Herdt  
Ventura County Star 6/24/2014

SACRAMENTO — Despite warnings that inaction could ignite a north-south water war that would prevent California from funding drought relief projects, the state Senate on Monday fell short of approving a proposed \$10.5 billion water bond for the November ballot.

If no agreement is reached before lawmakers leave on summer recess next week, a bond approved in 2009 and scheduled to go before voters in the fall will likely remain in place, with the strong possibility of triggering a north-south fight that could doom any chance of adoption.

Both measures include funding for ecosystem improvements in the fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, but state agencies could use money from the 2009 bond to accommodate projects that could potentially be seen as helping pave the way for the twin-tunnel plan. The tunnels would divert water from the Sacramento River under the Delta to be pumped to Southern California and the Central Valley.

“A bond that stokes a north-south water fight will not pass,” said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento. “A bond that is perceived as furthering the tunnels will not pass.”

The last time a conveyance system was proposed to route water outside the Delta for shipment elsewhere in the state, a peripheral canal in 1982, a heated campaign ensued, and the plan was overwhelmingly rejected by voters.

Steinberg cited polling by Senate Democrats that shows support for the 2009 plan drops to below 45 percent from 61 percent after respondents are presented with the opposition argument that it could be used to facilitate construction of the tunnels. The proposed substitute measure is designed to be “tunnel-neutral,” he said.

Placing a substitute bond on the ballot will require a two-thirds majority vote and therefore the support of some Republicans, none of whom voted in favor Monday. The final tally was five votes short of the required 27 needed, but Steinberg said three Democrats who were absent would have supported the measure.

“This thing’s getting really, really close,” said Hanford Sen. Andy Vidak, one of eight Republicans who abstained. He urged that negotiations continue.

“The drought is getting worse every day,” he said. “I go home every weekend. More trees are being pushed out; more vineyards are being taken out; more people are being put out of work.”

The substitute bond, SB 848, was written by Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, one of the Legislature's harshest critics of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, the program backed by Gov. Jerry Brown's administration that includes construction of the tunnels.

The proposal includes \$3 billion for water storage that could help fund three proposed dams; \$1.9 billion for regional drought response projects including water recycling, desalination and conservation; \$1 billion for projects to clean up contaminated groundwater basins; \$900 million to clean contaminated water supplies in 600 communities without drinkable supplies; and \$500 million for projects to capture urban stormwater runoff. Like the 2009 bond, it includes about \$3 billion for watershed and ecosystem projects, including money for the Delta. But Wolk's proposal would designate the Delta Conservancy, an agency whose board has representatives from each of the five Delta counties, to determine how the money would be spent.

"Some of the loudest opponents would like to see more money for the Delta and would like to see it controlled outside the Delta," she said. "That is a north-south war."

Wolk said that the proposed tunnel project is on its own administrative track, that the ultimate fight over whether to proceed will come later and that its fate should not be tied to a bond measure to be put before voters.

Support for the 2009 measure has eroded among lawmakers outside the Delta region as well.

Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, a key player in negotiating that package, said she can no longer support it because it is outdated and "not relevant to what's going on in California today. We're a lot more sensitive now to regional solutions. Let's save the discussion about the tunnels for another day."

The eight Republican senators who abstained appeared to be holding out for additional concessions. Steinberg warned that such delay was a dangerous and potentially counterproductive strategy. He said the measure has the key GOP demand for \$3 billion in water storage, with a requirement that money be continuously appropriated so that it cannot be later diverted for other uses.

"There's a big difference between demanding what you want and being satisfied when you get what you need," Steinberg said.

He said that if the Senate failed to take the lead on the issue, it risked the possibility that Brown would offer a scaled-down proposal on his own.

"If we don't stand our ground, and the governor weighs in, you can say goodbye to \$3 billion in storage," Steinberg said.

Other opposition to the substitute bond is being driven by the water contractors with the

most at stake in the proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan. They include the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which supplies water from the Delta to customers from Ventura County to San Diego.

“I’m aware of some consternation in Southern California, and that’s understandable,” said Sen. Kevin de Leon, D-Los Angeles.

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# El Niño might not end our regional drought

AME ANSELM  
EYE ON THE ENVIRONMENT  
Ventura County Star 6/22/2014

The seasons are predictable in Ventura County. The fog comes in summer and the rain in winter. If we get rain.

The last three years have delivered rainfall drastically below normal, causing Gov. Jerry Brown to declare a drought state of emergency. It's not just dry in Ventura County. There is a record low snowpack in California. That snowpack normally serves as water storage and is a source for 6 of our 10 cities. Unlike natural disasters such as earthquakes and fires that hit quickly with dramatic imagery, a drought can be difficult to perceive. It's hard to understand the magnitude of a drought when there is always water available when you turn on the tap.

Like the seasons, there is some predictability to our annual rainfall because of the El Niño southern oscillation, the La Niña/El Niño phenomenon. This month the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center put the chances of a weak to moderate El Niño event this winter at 80 percent. That's good news, right?

It's hard to say. A strong El Niño routinely produces an above-average rain year, and a weak El Niño corresponds with our wettest year on record. But don't get your hopes up.

Historically, weak El Niños far more frequently result in below-average rainfall for our region. Even a few moderate ones failed to produce average rainfall. El Niño or not, one good year will not be enough to replenish local water supplies. We must do more to conserve water now, and make better use of future rainfall.

The best place to start conserving water is outside. A surprisingly high 50-70 percent of household water is used outside. Small changes can conserve a lot of water; big changes can do even more.

## **SMALL CHANGES**

Water at dawn or after dusk to reduce loss to evaporation and wind. Adjust sprinklers to water only plants. Watering sidewalks and gutters is wasteful. Bacteria, which are measured to determine our beach water quality, live in the gutter. Water going down the gutter picks up the bacteria and carries it to the ocean where we swim and surf. There is no way to keep all the bacteria out of the water when it rains, but we can, and should, keep it out when it's not raining.

Learn how much to water. Too-frequent watering stunts a plant's root growth — plants won't send down deep roots when the soil is always moist. The right amount of water will produce hardier plants, but don't overwater. Water that soaks in past the root zone

is wasted, and so is any running over sidewalks and into the gutter. Worse, water from a garden that reaches the gutter can carry harmful pesticides and fertilizers into the environment.

## **BIG CHANGES**

If your plants are suffering, let them go. This is the time to rethink what is growing in your yard, and replace thirsty plants with climate-appropriate selections. However, established trees may need a deep watering to get them through the season.

Take this opportunity to redesign landscaping to maximize rain capture. Reduce hard surfaces to allow water to soak in the ground. Direct runoff from rain gutter downspouts to these areas, or better yet, install a rain barrel. This reduces water needs and benefits our creeks and ocean.

We all need to reduce our water use. To learn more check out these resources on plants and garden design, including classes, at the websites listed below. There are even rebates and incentives available from local water agencies such as recently increased turf removal rebates, now available in many areas up to \$3 per square foot and rain barrel rebates of \$75.

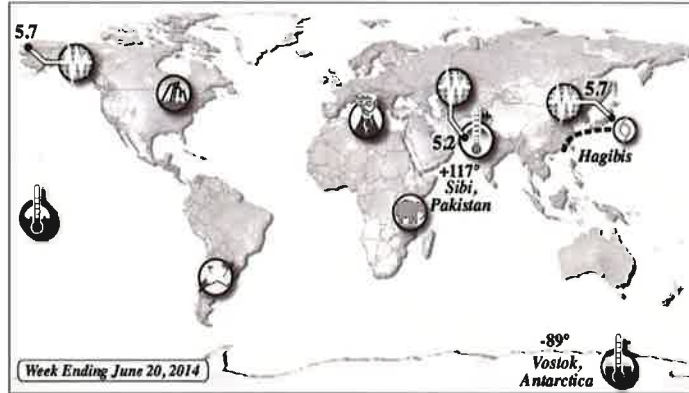
On the Net: Waterwise Gardening in Ventura County: [www.ventura.watersavingplants.com](http://www.ventura.watersavingplants.com).

SoCal Water Smart Rebates: <http://socalwatersmart.com/> Watershed Wise Landscape Training: [www.watershedwisetraining.com/class-calendar](http://www.watershedwisetraining.com/class-calendar) More information: <http://venturawatershed.org/savemore-water>

Arne Anselm is the Stormwater Resources Manager for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District. 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.

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**El Niño Omen**



May 2014 was calculated to be the third-warmest May in the past 35 years of satellite-measured global temperatures, which could portend massive global weather shifts later this year. It was also the warmest May that didn't occur during an El Niño ocean warming in the tropical Pacific, according to University of Alabama in Huntsville atmospheric scientist John Christy. The Earth System Science Center (ESSC), where Christy is director, determined that May was about 0.6 degrees Fahrenheit above seasonal normal for the month. The warmest May on record was in 1998 and occurred during the warmest and most influential El Niño in the climate record. The global seasonal average for that month was about 1.0 degree above normal. Given that this year is already unusually warm, Christy says the potentially emerging El Niño in the Pacific could challenge the 1998 episode's record. "With the baseline so much warmer, this upcoming El Niño won't have very far to go to break that (1.0 degree) record," Christy said. "That isn't to say it will, but even an average-sized warming event will have a chance to get close to that level."

# 6,200-year-old infection may be linked to early irrigation

By Maria Cheng Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 6/22/2014

LONDON — In a skeleton more than 6,200 years old, scientists have found the earliest known evidence of infection with a parasitic worm that now afflicts more than 200 million people worldwide.

Archaeologists discovered a parasite egg near the pelvis of a child skeleton in Northern Syria and say it dates back to a time when ancient societies first used irrigation systems to grow crops. Scientists suspect that the new farming technique meant people were spending a lot of time wading in warm water — ideal conditions for the parasites to jump into humans. That may have triggered outbreaks of the waterborne flatworm disease known as schistosomiasis.

“The invention of irrigation was a major technological breakthrough, (but) it had unintended consequences,” said Gil Stein, a professor of Near Eastern archaeology at the University of Chicago, one of the report’s authors. “A more reliable food supply came at the cost of more disease,” he wrote in an email.

People catch the flatworm parasite when they are in warm, fresh water; the tiny worms are carried by snails and burrow into human skin. After growing into adults, they live in the bladder, kidneys, intestines and elsewhere in the body for years. The parasites cause symptoms including fever, rash, abdominal pain, vomiting and paralysis of the legs.

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# States face big problems from microbeads

## *Tiny plastic bits found in birds, edible fish*

By John Flesher Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 6/22/2014



in this photo provided by [5gyres.org](http://5gyres.org), a sample of “microbeads” collected in eastern Lake Erie is placed on the face of a penny. Illinois environmentalists expecting a battle with business over a call for a ban on the tiny bits of plastic used in personal care products found the industry quickly collaborated.

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — Environmentalists in Illinois expected a battle royal over their call for a statewide ban on “microbeads” — tiny bits of plastic used in personal care products such as facial scrubs and toothpaste that are flowing by the billions into the Great Lakes and other waterways. Discovered only recently, they’re showing up inside fish that are caught for human consumption, scientists say.

But instead of resisting, leading companies quickly collaborated on a ban that was enacted by the state Legislature this spring. And with similar measures now pending in at least three other large states and in Congress, the extinction of microbeads is taking shape as one of the unlikeliest events in the politics of nature: a low-stress compromise by interest groups that are often at each other’s throats.

“To have that happen in one year is rare,” said Jen Walling of the Illinois Environmental Council, recalling the pessimistic response when she initially sought legislative sponsors. “I was not predicting we’d get it done at all.”

Don’t get used to it, said Mark Biel of the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois, which represented the product manufacturers during three months of negotiations. The quick deal resulted from unique circumstances, he said, including the availability of substitute ingredients.

“I just concluded that maybe this was one of those issues where it would be smart to try

to work something out,” he said.

Disagreements over details are delaying similar bills in California and New York, while a measure in Ohio has gained little traction. Still, all sides expect deals in most cases, and that given those states’ outsized place in the market, microbeads will disappear from U.S. products as the industry swallows the cost.

U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., a New Jersey Democrat, introduced a bill Wednesday proposing a nationwide ban that would take effect in 2018.

Environmentalists hope the collaborative experience carries over to debates concerning the Great Lakes’ other ills. Biel’s group last year helped scuttle a proposal to restrict flame retardants, which some consider an emerging contaminant in the freshwater seas. Still, he says the microbead talks nurtured a better working relationship, as have negotiations over fending off invasive species such as the Asian carp.

“There is room for common ground,” he said.

It’s been known for years that the world’s oceans teem with masses of floating plastic. But microplastics in the Great Lakes were discovered only when scientists dragged the surface of all five lakes in 2012 and 2013 with specially designed nets and found the specks everywhere.

Barely visible without a microscope, the bits flow through wastewater treatment plant screens and into the lakes. Sherri Mason, an environmental scientist with State University of New York-Fredonia who was a leader of the research team, said the beads are showing up the stomachs of Great Lakes perch and in fish-eating birds such as the doublecrested cormorant. Her group is studying whether the particles are absorbing toxins in the lakes.

Because treated wastewater flows into so many waterways, Mason said, “Every river and every inland lake you look at is going to have some plastic in it.”

The plastic exfoliants apparently came into widespread use in the 1990s, preferred because they are smoother to the skin than natural ingredients. Laurent Gilbert, director of advanced research at L’Oreal, said they have “no proven environmental toxicity.” Still, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Colgate, Unilever and L’Oreal are among the companies announcing plans to replace microbeads with natural substances such as ground-up fruit pits, oatmeal and sea salt.

The industry has yet to endorse a California bill that wouldn’t make an exception for biodegradable microbeads, which the industry says are on the drawing board. A ban has unanimously passed New York’s state Assembly, but is awaiting Senate action while the industry pushes for a slower timetable. The measure would prohibit most cosmetics with microbeads by 2016. The Illinois phaseout is more gradual, running from 2017 to the end of 2019.

The companies say that it can take years to develop new mixtures and get them to market.

But with microbeads apparently on their way out, ban supporters say the lesson is that public pressure can pay off.

“People say, ‘Wait, there’s plastic in my face wash? In my toothpaste?’ ” said Mason, who teamed with the California-based organization 5 Gyres on the research. “They understand innately that this isn’t right and ... industry definitely responds. When we put our minds to something we can make it happen.”



state University of New York at Fredonia instructor Sherri Mason (left), a New York environmental scientist who led a research team studying microplastics in the Great Lakes, examines a trawling device used to collect plastic microbeads from the water’s surface with sunny-Fredonia student Rachel Ricotta in Lake Erie’s Buffalo harbor. Associated Press Photos

I just concluded that maybe this was one of those issues where it would be smart to try to work something out.”

**Mark Biel, of the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois**

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# Local farmers, industry experts mobilize against state water curtailments



By Elizabeth Arakelian  
Turlock Journal POSTED June 20, 2014



Rights to irrigation water held by agencies like the Turlock Irrigation District since before 1914 will be up for discussion by the State Water Resources Control Board at its July 1 meeting.

Of the 9,528 junior water rights curtailment notices sent to Central Valley farmers by the State Water Resources Control Board on May 27 requiring them to stop diverting water from all streams flowing to the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys, only 21 percent mailed back the mandated response — an indicator of local farmers' posture towards the Board's intervention during this drought period.

The State Water Resources Control Board is now considering also curtailing senior water rights holders — or those acquired before 1914 — and local farmers are concerned about the future of not only their farms but the state's entire agriculture industry. In a bipartisan effort between Assembly member Kristin Olsen (R) and Assembly member Adam Gray (D), local farmers and water industry officials gathered at



the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau to voice concerns and interface in a town hall format prior to the State Board's meeting on July 1, which will determine if senior water rights holders will be able to keep their precedence.

"Our goal is to mobilize grass roots advocacy to fight the State Water Resources Control Board's proposal to curtail pre-1914 water rights... and they are now moving into completely unprecedented territory in what I believe is an effort to control water rights that they have been trying to get a hold of for years now," said Olsen. " And they are using the drought as an excuse to do that and I believe without the expressed authority to do so."

Olsen's sentiment was echoed throughout the town hall forum as farmers and water experts discussed ways to fight what they see as state legislators' political strategy to gain control of not only water rights but the agriculture industry by citing ecological concerns for reasons to impede water access.

"The thing is we have all the minimum flows, fish flows will be met in our basin, so if there are no environmental emergencies, then why are they going forward with this process?" asked Steve Knell, general manager of Oakdale Irrigation District.

"They are using environmental laws to achieve agendas that do not have your best interests at heart. They are undermining the entire agriculture industry in California," added Paul Campbell, a director on the Modesto Irrigation District board.

Leading up to the July 1 meeting, Gray and Olsen encouraged farmers and supporters to sign letters that were available at the meeting to send to state legislators claiming that curtailing water rights is an "egregious overreach" and to consider options such as recycling, storage, and desalination. While farmers and experts each vocalized different concerns, the industry stakeholders agreed upon one thing: the importance of a united front.

"No one has a more stellar record of doing more with less than agriculture — we have more than double the output in the past 40 years with the same amount of water— but

as farmers we tend to sit back and not say much but this is not the time,” said Paul Wenger, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation. “It’s not a time to hope it all works out. They want to see you fight over groundwater, they want to see you divided, but this is the time to work together.”

“They say that demand exceeds supply, therefore they have the right to curtail the water rights, but it ignores the fact that they are responsible... they are trying to keep you divided between districts and neighbors,” added Campbell.

Besides sending letters and showing strength in numbers at the July 1 decision, supporters also intend to call upon local Future Farmers of America chapters.

“FFA is a force of nature. We’ve seen them move mountains,” said Olsen.

With more than 70,000 California students in FFA, the experts aim to inspire the younger generation to utilize social media to generate a statewide conversation that extends beyond the agricultural community.

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*Page 2, Valley News Group, June 19, 2014*

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