

# NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public Outreach**

Organized by date

## Not everyone happy with new Westlake mayor

By Sylvie Belmond  
The Acorn 12/25/2014



Ned Davis

At the Nov. 19 reorganization ceremony for the Westlake Village City Council, one resident urged officials not to appoint Councilmember Ned Davis as mayor for 2015.

Frank Bonvino, whose home is next to the 5-million-gallon water tank under construction in the Three Springs neighborhood of Westlake Village, said Davis—and Councilmember Philippa Klessig—have shown favoritism to the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District at the expense of city residents.

Bonvino claims the construction has come close to causing two traffic accidents on Three Springs Drive since work on the tank began last March.

And on Oct. 1, a 50-foot section of 36-inch-diameter steel pipe fell off a construction truck and rolled within 100 feet of Bonvino's home on Sandycreek Drive before being stopped by an oak tree, he said.

Tuesday, the truck traffic reached a crescendo with a reported 58 concrete haulers going in and out of Three Springs once every 4 minutes starting at 7 a.m.

According to Bonvino, many residents in Three Springs feel Davis does not represent their interests. Bonvino said that during a City Council meeting in October after the pipe fell off the truck, Davis ignored the safety issues created by the tank project.

"His comments about the accident were nothing short of ridiculous, demeaning and dismissive,"

Bonvino said.

He presented a petition signed by 29 people who oppose Davis' mayoral appointment.

The mayor and mayor pro tem positions in Westlake Village rotate yearly. Davis, who joined the council in 2007, was chosen as the new mayor at last month's meeting, and Councilmember Sue Mc- Sweeney was appointed mayor pro tem for the upcoming year.

Davis and Klessig did not respond to Bonvino's comments.

But in an interview with *The Acorn*, Davis said, "Frank has every right to his feelings and his opinion."

Klessig said Davis is committed to safeguarding the well-being of residents.

"He really listens to people," she said.

Davis said that residents who oppose the new water tank are looking to the City Council to fix issues, but that the city does not have authority over the project, only the water district does.

He said the city worked closely with the water district to reduce the impact of the construction on Three Springs residents.

"I feel badly for those who are impacted by this, but also gratified that the city was able to enter into (an agreement) to mitigate construction impact," Davis said.

"We're almost done with it, and thank goodness no one has been hurt," he said.

At the meeting on Nov. 19, two people spoke in support of the City Council's efforts.

Westlake Village resident Sheldon Mende said Bonvino's criticism of Klessig and Davis is without merit, and that the council and staff are doing everything in their power to protect the interests of residents.

In the November LVMWD election, the water district board directors who supported the water tank, Glen Peterson and Lee Renger, were reelected, while Barry Steinhardt, who opposed the project, was defeated.

Letters

## Water tank work is OK so far

Last week, 58 cement trucks rolled up Three Springs Drive.

And 58 cement trucks returned down the same road. No shaking. No rumbling. No speeding.

Minimal noise heard as I spent the day in my Three Springs adjacent house. What I did see was a friendly water district employee paid merely to stand by his truck (counting the trucks as they arrived) and a police cruiser stationed a few blocks in.

Guess who will be paying those and any other future costs resulting from the continuing discussion? The tank appears to be nearing completion, so certainly there must be more important issues that matter to the community at large, as well as Westlake's mayor and City Council.

**Jesse Slome**  
**Westlake Village**

The Acorn 1/2/2015

## Agoura Rd. widening off to a rocky start

*Expensive water pipeline causes snafu*

By Stephanie Bertholdo  
The Acorn 12/25/2014

### ACORNBITS

Three construction phases are planned for the Agoura Road widening project. Phase one will start at the westerly city limit and proceed east to Reyes Adobe Road. Phase two will continue the project from Reyes Adobe to Kanan Road; and the final phase will include work from Kanan to Cornell Road.

A groundbreaking ceremony is slated for January. Construction will begin in late January or early February, the city said.

The project is estimated to take between 16 and 18 months to complete.

The Agoura Hills City Council and the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District hit a bump in the road concerning the Agoura Road widening project.

The project will expand the street from two to four lanes from the city's western border to Cornell Road. The improvements will help make possible a swath of commercial and residential development along the road that has been planned for more than a decade.

New bike paths, medians and sidewalks will be created.

But in a presentation to the City Council on Dec. 10, Agoura Hills public works director Ramiro Adeva said the water district will not be installing a new 8-inch recycled water line due to costs that were higher than expected.

As a result, the road will have to be torn up a second time and the pipe installed when the water district's customer base has increased enough to justify the higher cost.

The city isn't pleased with the delay.

C.A. Rasmussen Inc., a Valencia based general contractor, was low bidder on the estimated \$ 15.7- million project. The bidding included two parts—one for road widening and the other for the new recycledwater line, to be paid for by the water district.

While Rasmussen's bid for the road widening project was the lowest of the seven construction bids, their bid for the recycled water line was only fifth best. Rasmussen's bid for the pipeline was \$1.5 million. The lowest bid for the water line came in at \$787,000.

"It always makes sense to put in all the infrastructure when you do a road," said David Pedersen, LVMWD general manager. "The challenge is the cost. We were faced with a project cost that was 63 percent higher than our project engineer (anticipated).

"That's beyond our comfort level—way beyond. We have to be fiscally responsible," Pedersen said.

Councilmember Bill Koehler bristled at the water district's decision not to build the pipeline.

"(The water district) has been talking to us about saving water," Koehler said. "It just bothers me." The city will have to irrigate the new Agoura Road landscape with potable water and not the cheaper recycled water.

Councilmember John Edelston suggested rejecting all bids and starting over, but complications exist. Adeva said part of the problem is that two agencies are paying for two jobs to one contractor.

"There is no way to know how costs will be broken up. The city could be stuck with a higher bid," Adeva said.

Councilmember Harry Schwarz said it upsets him that the water district must continue to use potable and not recycled water to irrigate the landscaping along Agoura Road.

"There was no foresight there," Schwarz said. "Even if (the water line) wasn't used right away, it will be used in the future. We're going to have water shortages for a long time. (The new pipeline) is good for our community, good for our region. We should . . . try to get them to rethink this."

Mayor Illece Buckley Weber suggested approving the Rasmussen bid and sending a letter to the water district about the importance of the recycle water line to the community.

Pedersen said the water district has not given up on the idea of building the new pipeline. District officials plan on meeting with the city and Rasmussen to "explore all options."

One option would be to send out the pipeline bid separately, although delays in completing the road widening could result.

“Let’s make sure we turn over every stone and look at all options,” Pedersen said. “We want to see the work done together too.”

Adeva said the road widening can still continue without the water line, which was to be installed under a two-mile stretch of Agoura Road between Ladyface Court and Lewis Road.

# The Year in Review

*The people, places and events that shaped 2014*

## WESTLAKE VILLAGE

By Sylvie Belmond  
The Acorn 12/25/2014

The new community park and YMCA in Westlake Village—finally coming together after more than a dozen years in the planning—topped the list of 2014 news stories in Westlake Village.

In January, billionaire David Murdock announced he would give \$10 million to fund the startup costs for the new YMCA. The 60,000-square-foot building is scheduled to open in fall 2015.

Meanwhile, the City of Westlake Village constructed two sports fields with surrounding trails and amenities on the northwest side of the property. The ball fields will open in March, 2015.

The city and Triunfo YMCA are still raising capital for the joint sports park project, which will include multi-use sports fields, children's play areas, volleyball courts and a skate park. The skate park should open in summer and the Council will also work to fund and complete the remaining ball field and the soccer fields. A remaining \$12 million is needed to complete the YMCA, officials said.

The year 2014 saw great strides made in the reconstruction of the Lindero Canyon overpass in Westlake Village. The revamped bridge has more space for traffic and safer paths for cyclists and pedestrians.

The city is also working to improve major intersections near the 101 Freeway. New decorative crosswalks will be installed at the Lindero Canyon and Agoura roads intersection in early 2015.

In May came this news: A black bear was struck and killed by a vehicle near the Lindero Canyon Road exit on the 101 Freeway.

For the first time in its history, Westlake Village hosted a 4th of July fireworks show in partnership with Westlake Village Inn and Westlake Golf Course.

And last summer the city also introduced a free weekend shuttle service, which ran through the summer and again during the holidays.

In July, the Target store at the new Shoppes at Westlake Village opened amid fanfare. It was the first business to open in the new 245,000-square-foot shopping center on Russell Ranch Road.



With about 30 other businesses, including an In-N-Out Burger drive-thru restaurant, the Dan Selleck-built center has become a popular destination for local shoppers and diners. Several other stores and businesses remain under construction.

Westlake Village officials are also working on a long-term plan to redevelop an aging commercial area northwest of Lindero Canyon Road and the 101 Freeway.

The past year was a difficult one for some city leaders.

Earlier in the year, Mayor Mark Rutherford was sued for his role in the ownership of an allegedly poorly maintained mobile home park in Hacienda Heights.

The lawsuit, filed in May by more than 80 residents in a 456-home development, described a litany of troubles, including allegations of racial prejudice, sexual harassment, invasion of privacy and property damage due to negligence.

Rutherford, a professional arbitrator, denied the allegations, saying his wife's family has owned the park for more than 30 years and has taken pride in its maintenance.

In November, one resident urged officials not to appoint Councilmember Ned Davis as mayor for 2015. Frank Bonvino, whose home is next to the 5-million-gallon water tank under construction in Three Springs, said Davis, and Councilmember Philippa Klessig, showed favoritism to the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District at the expense of city residents.

Bonvino unsuccessfully sued Las Virgenes Municipal Water District in the hopes of halting the construction of the water tank in his neighborhood.

The project also created discord at the water district.

Following four hours of acrimonious debate in January, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board of directors voted 3-2 to begin construction of the new water tank in Westlake.

Directors Glen Peterson, Lee Renger and Charles Caspary said the \$13-million tank is essential to solve a storage deficiency in the district's western potable water system. But Directors Barry Steinhardt and Len Polan did not agree.

In March, Steinhardt filed a complaint with the L.A. County district attorney's office alleging that the water district's vote to approve the tank was illegal because he was not allowed to pursue a discussion about blasting and other environmental issues. The district attorney ruled in Steinhardt's favor and said the water board's tank discussions violated the California Brown Act open meetings law.

But despite the acrimony, a majority of voters showed their support for the water district's leadership when they reelected Peterson and Renger to the board. Steinhardt, however, was defeated by Jay Lewitt, a water tank supporter.

The 2014 drought took its toll on the local communities, including Westlake, and the water district responded by adopting new regulations and offering incentives that encouraged conservation by homes and businesses.

## First manual measurement of Sierra snowpack to occur next week



Recent storms have capped Half Dome and the Yosemite high country with snow in Yosemite National Park. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By AMANDA COVARRUBIAS  
LA TIMES 12/23/2014

The first manual measurement of the Sierra snowpack next week will help determine signs of drought relief

The winter's first manual measurement of the Sierra Nevada snowpack will take place next week, state officials said Tuesday, eager for any signs of relief from one of California's worst droughts in a century of record-keeping.

The snowpack is crucial to the state water supply because it replenishes reservoirs during warmer months.

"We rely on the snowpack," said Doug Carlson, a state Department of Water Resources spokesman. "It provides 30% of the water used in the late spring and early summer."



At brunch on a recent Thursday, Sunny Butler nibbled at an omelet and considered playing a round later that afternoon. Part of the joy of living on the 18th hole of the Citrus Club in the Coachella Valley, Butler said, is the verdant green landscape just beyond the back door. ( Matt Stevens )

Recent storms brought several feet of snow to parts of the Sierra and elsewhere. But California will need a steady supply of it over the coming months to make a lasting difference in the depleted snowpack.

"Abundant snowfall in the mountains would be an important component of a drought-ending scenario," officials with the water resources department said in announcing the Dec. 30 manual check. "Surface reservoirs are unlikely to be recharged to normal levels unless precipitation and snowpack this water year are both well above historical averages."

The snowpack is constantly monitored by electronic sensors at 104 points across the Sierra, and manual checks are conducted once a month through May 1.

One of the manual measurements will take place at the Phillips Station snow course off California 50 near Echo Summit, about 90 miles east of Sacramento. Results of the 11 a.m. survey should be available to the public by early afternoon, officials said.

Electronic readings of the snowpack showed it at 54% for Dec. 23; it had been at 40% on Dec. 12, according to state data.

Because this has been the warmest year on record in California, much of the snow is melting before it can accumulate into a healthy snowpack, Carlson said.

Last winter's snowpack was essentially depleted by late spring, according to state data.

The water year that ended Sept. 30 was the third-driest period on record, state officials said. Only 1924 and 1977 recorded less statewide rain. It was the driest year ever in the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast and Southern California.

The water resources department measures precipitation at [eight stations](#) in the Northern Sierra, which had recorded 22.4 inches of rain as of Tuesday morning — or 7 inches

more than normal for the date. Water experts have said the state would need about 75 inches of rain on the eight-station index by the end of the water year, Sept. 30, to end the drought.

"These extraordinarily dry and warm conditions strengthened the drought's hold on California, and reservoir storage continued to fall through most of 2014," the agency said in a news release Tuesday.

For example, the state's largest reservoir, Shasta Lake, normally holds nearly 2.8 million acre-feet of water in late December, but as of Tuesday it had only 62% of that amount, or about 1.7 million acre-feet.

"It indicates we have a long way to go before we can say we're anywhere near ending the drought," Carlson said.

Recent storms raised the level from just over 1 million acre-feet on Nov. 29, the lake's lowest in 25 years, officials said.

Carlson said officials would have a better idea of where California stands drought-wise at the end of February — halfway through the winter rain season.

"The end of the midpoint is a good indicator," he said.

The year's rainfall will determine whether the allocation to the State Water Project's 29 customers will be changed in coming months, officials said. Currently, the 29 contractors, which represent water agencies throughout the state, are scheduled to receive 10% of the amount they requested for 2015; in 2014, they received 5%.

The contractors had requested 4.2 million acre-feet for 2015. One acre-foot can meet the needs of a typical California family of four for a year.

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Op-Ed

## What to expect in 2015

### *A water wake-up call*

By Dan Cayan  
LA Times

Everyone wants to know: Will this drought finally end?

Over nearly two decades, especially the last three years, the winter North Pacific storm track has been lean; since 1999, much of California has built up a deficit that amounts to a loss of two years' worth of normal precipitation. Only a handful of years have ever registered enough precipitation to reverse a shortfall like this. Our recent storms will help, of course, but complete recovery is unlikely this year.

This drought is emblematic of California's highly volatile winter precipitation regime. We are unusually dependent upon extremely wet days to deliver a major fraction of our water supply. We use stored water in reservoirs, snowpack and underground aquifers to carry us through. But lately, this system isn't keeping up. The extremely warm winter and spring of 2014 disproportionately reduced California's mountain snowpack, and we have drawn down our aquifers to alarming levels.

In fact, that warm weather is a harbinger of California's future. Within the next few decades, global changes probably will leave us with chronically depleted spring snowpacks and summers that get hotter earlier. A sure bet for the year to come is more attention on conservation, better information and forecasts and more scrambling by water agencies to improve water systems and planning.

*Dan Cayan is a research meteorologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, and the U.S. Geological Survey.*

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## Federal appeals court backs restrictions on delta water deliveries



A boater plies the Sacramento River near the town of Rio Vista. A federal appeals court on Monday backed environmental restrictions on water deliveries from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to urban Southern California and San Joaquin Valley agriculture. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

By BETTINA BOXALL

LA TIMES 12/22/2014

Court rules that water from Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is important not just for people but also fish

Appeals court backs environmental limits on water deliveries to Southern California and San Joaquin Valley

Opinion echoes another 9th Circuit decision issued earlier this year that affirmed delta smelt protections

Ruling that water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is important not just for people but also for the fish that swim in it, a federal appeals court on Monday backed environmental restrictions on deliveries to urban Southern California and San Joaquin Valley agriculture.

A panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed most of a lower court ruling in a long-running legal battle over endangered fish protections in the delta, the hub of California's water system.



Los Angeles gets 88% of its water from three major aqueducts, flowing from the Colorado River, Owens Valley and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. ( Rosanna Xia and Rong-Gong Lin II )

The appeals decision was issued in one of two lawsuits filed by San Joaquin Valley irrigation districts — including the Westlands Water District — and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California challenging federal protections that at times limit pumping from the delta to the big aqueduct systems that carry water south.

Though the water districts won at the U.S. District Court level in the two cases, the 9th Circuit has now unraveled both of those victories.

Monday's decision upheld a set of environmental restrictions imposed in 2009 by the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect imperiled chinook salmon, steelhead and green sturgeon that migrate through the delta, along with a small population of orca whales that prey on salmon.

Noting that "people need water, but so do fish," the 80-page opinion echoed another 9th Circuit decision issued this year that affirmed delta smelt protections adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As in the smelt case, the appeals judges concluded that U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger overstepped legal bounds when he relied on thousands of pages of outside scientific opinion to invalidate many of the environmental restrictions.





There are two things very annoying about the deluges that have been drenching California. And neither involves nature. ( George Skelton )

Judge Richard Tallman, who wrote the opinion, said the three-judge panel agreed that the fisheries service "used the best scientific data available, even if that science was not always perfect."

Major urban and farm water districts that get supplies from the delta have for years attacked the salmon and smelt protections in the courts and the political arena. The water contractors argue that federal fishery agencies focus too much on the effects of the delta pumping operations while ignoring other harms to native species, such as pollution and predation by non-native fish.

Bob Muir, spokesman for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which imports delta water to the Southland, said Monday's decision was not surprising, given the ruling in the smelt case.

Metropolitan and a number of other agencies have petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the smelt decision. The high court in recent years has declined to take up other California water cases. A decision on the request is expected next month.



In a sharp rebuke of state plans for a massive water tunnel system in Northern California, federal environmental officials say that the project would violate pollution standards and could worsen conditions for imperiled fish species. ( Bettina Boxall )

The appeals opinion "is likely to be the last word. But you never know," said Drew Caputo, vice president of litigation at Earthjustice, which represented fishing and environmental groups that intervened in the salmon case.

Caputo called Monday's opinion "a pretty resounding affirmation by the judges that the [fisheries service] did the right thing when it protected the salmon."

In a departure from the detailed parsing of environmental law that made up most of the opinion, Tallman opened with a passage from "East of Eden," John Steinbeck's novel about California's Salinas Valley: "And then the dry years would come ... The land dried up and the grasses headed out miserably a few inches high and great bare scabby places appeared in the valley."

"The same can be said for California's Central Valley," Tallman wrote, adding that the salmon case was about competing demands for delta water.

"This water is essential to the continuing vitality of agriculture in the Central Valley, and some 25 million Californians depend on it for daily living. But that water is also an important habitat for thousands of river and anadromous fish, many of which are endangered."

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## Recent storms send Yosemite waterfalls rushing back



Water cascades down the granite face of Upper Yosemite Falls as recent storms have brought some park waterfalls back to life. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By [DIANA MARCUM](#)

LA TIMES 12/22/2014

This year, the return of Yosemite's waterfalls was more wondrous than usual. Because they had disappeared

The water dropped, a pure white ribbon fluttering down-down-down a towering granite wall.

In other winters it was a sight to behold, but to be expected. This year, the return of Yosemite's waterfalls was more.

Because they had disappeared.

When California is not in a historic drought, winter snow piles up high in the backcountry. Come spring, it melts, running down rivers and over cliffs. Yosemite Valley's waterfalls build to thundering crescendos and drum all summer. Some seasons, if it's hot and dry, the cascade of water stops for a beat at the tail-end of summer, until the autumn rains.



Low fog moves into Yosemite Valley near the base of El Capitan as night falls in Yosemite National Park. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

This has been the hottest year on record in California. Wildfires raged around and in the park. Fall rains didn't come.

The famous granite walls were mostly dry by the end of June, and no one was sure whether the waterfalls would return by Christmas.

In the first week of December a storm passed over the Sierra Nevada. It rained for two days up high near Tuolumne meadows.

"One day later, Yosemite Falls came back," said Ryan Sheridan, a park employee at Denegan's Deli. "I was riding my bike to work and I just stopped and kept looking. It's hard to miss. It's the essence of pure power."

Bridalveil Fall and Cascade Fall also were running. He feared it wouldn't last. But just as the rumble of water started to fade, another storm renewed the volume.

"Hopefully we get a lot of snow and the falls come back with a vengeance," said Sheridan, 22. "I don't think it means the drought is over or that the climate isn't changing, but it's comforting to see a natural process greater than anything we can control."

Yosemite Falls is probably the park's most famous waterfall. One of the tallest in North America, it's actually three separate waterfalls that drop a total of 2,425 feet. It can be seen — and heard — in much of Yosemite Valley.



A photographer stands with his tripod as mist rises from Cook's Meadow in Yosemite National Park. The recent storms in the region brought back the majestic waterfalls that had disappeared in the drought. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Craig Jeschke, of Robinson, Kan. (pop. 300), had seen photos and watched videos, and long wanted to do exactly what he was doing on a recent day: stand in front of Yosemite Falls.

It was a 15th-anniversary trip for him and his wife, Elizabeth. The kids were at home. They'd rented a convertible, drank wine in Napa and seen the ocean. But this was the highlight.

He hadn't known the falls had stopped before recent storms.

"Did you hear that, Liz? California is in a drought. The falls weren't running," he called to his wife.

She came to him and held his hand.

"I'm happy it rained our first day here, " she said. "My husband has a thing for waterfalls. That sound is something man can't make."

Above the valley, the Mist Trail to Vernal and Nevada falls is one of Yosemite's most dangerous and popular hikes. A summer day can see 2,000 visitors.

With another storm moving in and the route that stair-steps beside Vernal closed for the winter, Madi Kaufman and Lily Logan were among a handful on the trail.

The two 21-year-olds have been best friends since they were 3. Logan was boarding a plane in Florida to come home to the Bay Area for winter break when Kaufman called and said, "Let's go to Yosemite."



Sunlight sets a granite cliff aglow above Upper Yosemite Falls as recent storms have brought the falls back to life in Yosemite National Park. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

"We didn't know what to expect," Kaufman said. "But it had been storming. It rained more in the past three weeks than all of 2013, so we thought, 'Let's go see.'"

Driving up, they saw the trees sparkle with crystalline snow. Waiting for the bus to the trailhead, they made eye contact with a statue-still buck. Now they were taking a snapshot on an empty footbridge with a view of Vernal Fall.

"It's so much beauty. So much water," Logan said.

The Merced River, flowing under the bridge, was dry-rocks low — a reminder of snowpack that was 25% of normal last spring. Even damp, twigs broke under foot with a brittle crunch.

But throughout the valley, there was a sound that had been missing: moving water. Creeks were running, rivers were beginning to rise, and the low roar of waterfalls bounced off granite walls.

Lucy Garces, 27, a park employee, found it comforting.

"I was a little terrified this summer. There were fires all around. Every time, they said it depended on which way the wind blew if there was going to be fire in the valley," she said. "Now there are waterfalls surrounding us again."

She's been visiting Yosemite Falls every chance she gets.

"When you stand close, the decibel level seems impossible," she said.

"You can hear the power and the danger and you feel so small, but it's so big that you get to be here and cherish it."

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## County heads into '15 with detailed plan for cleaner stormwater

Ame Anselm  
Ventura County Star 12/21/2014

The end of the year is nearing, which means it's time to reflect on accomplishments of the past year and set goals for the coming New Year. It's a good practice for self-improvement for everyone, including large, multiagency government programs.

The Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program does that in its 2013-14 annual report. The program is a collaboration of the 10 cities in Ventura County, county government and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

These agencies have joined to more efficiently implement state requirements to reduce pollution in urban runoff and improve the water quality of Ventura County's creeks and shorelines.

When it rains, water runs off streets, roofs and driveways into storm drains that direct it to local creeks and the ocean. The runoff picks up pollution along the way. These agencies are responsible for any pollution leaving their storm drain systems.

The annual report is a complete accounting of all these agencies' urban runoff pollution prevention efforts over the past year. The word "complete" is not an understatement. At almost 2,000 pages, it's an extremely detailed examination of what we know about the quality of stormwater runoff countywide.

Beach water quality in Ventura County is still among the best in the state, but that doesn't mean we've solved all the problems. While bacteria are rarely found at levels that could cause health problems at our beaches, there are always much higher and potentially harmful levels in storm drains and creeks during storm flows.

Exactly where all the bacteria come from is a mystery, so the stormwater program has embarked on cutting-edge science of analyzing bacterial DNA in the water to narrow down the sources. If it turns out the bacteria are associated with human activities, then the stormwater program can focus on those.

Detergents have also been identified in stormwater, usually during small rain events. Not surprisingly, if anyone is washing equipment in the gutter, or even their car in the driveway, that sudsy water will leave a residue of detergent (possibly along with automotive fluids and metals from brake dust) that will be washed off by the next rain.

Another new initiative is unifying digital storm drain maps of all the cities and developed



areas of the county. This will smooth the way in determining the best locations for projects that can infiltrate runoff to remove pollutants and save that water for future use.

Great strides can be achieved if everyone keeps an eye on the environment and remembers their homes are part of the watershed and their actions affect the quality of our creeks and beaches. Make New Year's resolutions to pick up after your pets every time, never wash equipment outside unless it can drain to landscaping, and make life easier by taking your car to an automated or self-service car wash to keep the soap out of the gutter.

If you are not one to take the easy road, then please read all 2,000 pages of the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program 2013-14 Annual Report and learn how everyone can keep an eye on the environment by protecting our watersheds.

On the Net: [http://www. VCStormwater.org](http://www.VCStormwater.org); [http://www. cleanwatershed.org](http://www.cleanwatershed.org) Arne Anselm is stormwater resources manager for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District. He can be reached at [arne.anselm@ventura.org](mailto:arne.anselm@ventura.org). Representatives of government or nonprofit agencies who want to submit articles on environmental topics for this column should contact Goldstein at 658-4312 or [david.goldstein@ventura.org](mailto:david.goldstein@ventura.org).

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# NOAA predicts rainy start to '15

*Prediction is 1st such in last 5 years*

By The Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 12/20/2014

SAN FRANCISCO — Federal scientists say there is a 75 percent chance of average or aboveaverage precipitation between January and the end of March for California.

The San Jose Mercury News reports that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a report on Thursday predicting a wetter than usual outlook during the first three months of the year. It's the first time in five years that such a prediction has been made.

Officials say 98 percent of California is in a severe drought with many parts of the state receiving only about half the rainfall as the historic average.

With three weeks of heavy rains, reservoirs continued to slowly rise across Northern California. On Thursday, the U.S. Drought Monitor, a weekly map issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies, showed that 32 percent of California still is in "exceptional drought," down from 55 percent last week, the Mercury News reported.

Officials say that even with all the rain, Shasta Lake in the Northern California town of Redding is just 33 percent full now, up from being 23 percent full three weeks ago.

"There have been some healthy rises, but it still has a long, long way to go to recover back to levels that we saw three years ago," Kevin Werner, NOAA's western regional climate services director in Seattle, told the Mercury News.

Still, it's unlikely the historic drought will end this year, according to the National Weather Service.

It will take about 11 trillion gallons of water to recover from California's continuing drought, according to an analysis of NASA satellite data released this week.

A little more relief is coming over the next few days. The weather service says more rain is expected in most Bay Area cities this weekend, then it's expected to be dry through Christmas Day.

And with the rains, the Sierra Nevada snowpack was at 50 percent of the historic average on Thursday, up from 24 percent three weeks ago.

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