

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

State panel looks at \$7.5B water fund

Governor seeks \$533M for first year

Ventura County Star 2/13/2015



Brown proposed California start spending its water bond funds slowly.

SACRAMENTO — Hoping to make the most of what the chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board called “an incredible gift for the people of California,” the Senate Budget Committee on Thursday began examining how to spend funds from a \$7.5 billion water bond.

Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed that the spending start slowly, as his budget proposal calls for appropriating \$533 million in the first year and then ramping up spending in subsequent years.

Analysts told senators that the spending Brown proposes, which would average about \$1 billion per year over the next five years, is in line with how money from previous water bonds has been managed.

“It’s rare to get over \$1 billion a year spent in the water sector,” said Ellen Hanak, a fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California who specializes in water policy. “It’s not overly ambitious in getting bond funds out the door, and that’s probably realistic.”

Committee Chairman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, said lawmakers must balance the dilemma of trying to put the bond money to work as quickly as possible to deal with drought-related problems while also ensuring it is

spent efficiently and responsibly. Voters approved the bond in November.

“Our new mantra is going to be getting the greatest pop for the drop,” Leno said.

The biggest single item in the water bond was \$2.7 billion for water storage projects, but possible construction of dams will take years of planning. Brown proposes \$3 million be spent to start the process next year.

Most of the first allocation of money, \$178 million, would be used for watershed restoration projects, principally in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Additionally, Brown proposes \$137 million in matching funds to assist local water agencies in financing water-recycling and brackish water desalination projects.

Most urgently, the proposal calls for spending \$136 million to assist communities where local water supplies has become so scarce or degraded that it cannot be used for drinking.

Leno noted that an estimated 1 million Californians “are unable to drink the water out of their tap.”

Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board, said money from the bond “can make a pretty big dent” in assisting those communities fairly quickly, because many have developed plans but have no money to implement them.

“There are hundreds of thousands of people we know we can help,” she said. “I’m confident we’ll get a lot done within one year, but not nearly enough.”

Natural Resources Secretary John Laird told the panel the projects that will be funded over the life of the bond address priorities that were identified in a water action plan developed by his agency last year.

That includes not just storage, he noted, but also increased use of treated wastewater, capturing urban storm water and cleaning groundwater that is now either too polluted or brackish to provide beneficial use.

“It’s an all-of-the-above strategy, and we need it all,” he said.

Noting that climate modeling forecasts the Sierra snowpack will be severely reduced by global warming — and that the snowpack this year now stands at 22 percent of normal — Leno asked whether policymakers should be considering changes to a water system that has been structured in large part to capture spring runoff from melting snow.

“Our surface reservoirs are going to be taxed,” said Hanak, who noted their flood-protection functions will become more important as increasing amounts of rain, rather than snow, fall during winter storms.

She said one strategy that must be considered is to use existing plumbing systems to direct water from winter storms out of reservoirs into areas where it will spread to replenish groundwater aquifers.

Scientists' data forecast 'megadroughts'

Spell could last 35 years, study reports

Ventura County Star 2/13/2015



A warning buoy sits on the dry, cracked bed of Lake Mendocino Ukiah. As bad as the drought in California and the Southwest was last year and in the Midwest a couple years ago, scientists say far worse historic decades-long dry spells are coming. Associated press file

Near SAN JOSE — As bad as recent droughts in California, the Southwest and the Midwest have been, scientists say far worse “megadroughts” are coming— and they rebound to last for decades.

“Unprecedented drought conditions” — the worst in more than 1,000 years— are likely to come to the Southwest and Central Plains after 2050 and stick around because of global warming, according to a new study in the journal *Science Advances* on Thursday.

“Nearly every year is going to be dry toward the end of the 21st century compared to what we think of as normal conditions now,” said study lead author Benjamin Cook, a NASA atmospheric scientist. “We’re going to have to think about a much drier future in western North America.”

There’s more than an 80 percent chance that much of the central and western United States will have a 35-year-or-longer “megadrought” later this century, said study co-author Toby Ault of Cornell University, adding that “water in the Southwest is going to become more precious than it already is.”

Mega droughts last for decades instead of just a few years. The 1930s Dust Bowl went on for more than 35 years, Ault said.

The study is based on current increasing rate of rising emissions of carbon dioxide and complex simulations run by 17 different computer models, which generally agreed on the outcome, Cook said.

The regions Cook looked at include California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, northern Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, most of Iowa, southern Minnesota, western Missouri, western Arkansas, and north western Louisiana.

Looking back in records trapped in tree ring and other data, there were megadroughts in the Southwest and Central Plains in the 1100s and 1200s that lasted several decades, but these will be worse, Cook said. Those were natural and not caused by climate change, unlike those forecast for the future, Cook said.

Because of changes in the climate, the Southwest will see less rain. But for both regions the biggest problem will be the heat, which will increase evaporation and dry out the soil. The result is a vicious cycle: The air grows even drier, and hotter, Cook said.

Scientists had already figured that climate change would increase the odds of worse droughts in the future, but this study makes it look worse and adds to a chorus of strong research, said Jonathan Overpeck, co-director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of Arizona.

“These results are not surprising, but are eye opening nonetheless,” said Overpeck, who wasn’t part of the research, in email.

Storms bring bit of relief to state

Drought conditions decrease 10%

Ventura County Star 2/13/2015

In rare good news on the California drought, extremely dry conditions in northern parts of the state improved by 10 percent after a series of strong storms.

This week's U.S. Drought Monitor reports extreme conditions dropped from 77 percent last week to 67 percent. The positive change occurred mostly in northwestern California and the Santa Cruz Mountains between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. The northern half of the Santa Lucia Range, which is along the Central Coast, also saw drought conditions improve.

Meanwhile, exceptional drought in California—the most severe classification — remained unchanged at nearly 40 percent.

A series of strong Pacific storms brought much-needed rainfall to Northern California, according to David Simeral, a research scientist with the Western Regional Climate Center.

Portions of Northern California were battered by widespread heavy downpours last weekend, bringing the “first significant precipitation” since December, he said.

The storm system dumped 3 to 15 inches of rain across the Northern California region.

Runoff from the storm, however, added 500,000 acre-feet of water to California's four major reservoirs — Folsom, Oroville, Shasta and Trinity, he said.

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LETTERS

Drought relief

Joe Wigert, Camarillo

1. Cancel the bullet train.
2. With the savings, build around 2,000 desalination facilities throughout the state.

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Editorial

Amid a lack of fracking data, the state should halt new operations



Oil pumps and drilling equipment in an oil field in Kern County, where the majority of California's oil and gas production is centered. A year's worth of data that tested water coming out of fracked wells found high concentrations of benzene, a human carcinogen. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD
LA TIMES 2/13/2015

No one knows how much, if any, of the waste pumped into the improperly permitted wells was from fracking

The wastewater from oil drilling, hydraulic fracturing and other extraction processes is supposed to be injected only into wells where the groundwater is already too toxic to be used for drinking or irrigation, even if heavily treated. But last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency identified 10 California wells where that rule had been ignored.

On average, the 'flowback fluid' from fracking operations contains levels of benzene about 700 times the levels considered safe for human use.-

Since then, the number of wells where wastewater was improperly injected has ballooned to 490, though 109 of them are no longer in use. That's more than a fourth of all the wells — known as injection wells — currently used to dispose of industrial wastewater. It represents a tremendous failure by the state, which wrongly issued injection permits for wells in areas with protected groundwater.

A separate [Times analysis](#) of the wastewater produced by hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking, should increase Californians' concerns about its potential for tainting usable water. On average, the “flowback fluid” from fracking operations contains levels of benzene about 700 times the levels considered safe for human use.

But how much of that has found its way into protected aquifers? Shockingly, no one knows. The state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources does not know how much, if any, of the waste pumped into the improperly permitted wells was from fracking. Industries are required to report the amount and composition of the waste they inject into wells; the state should compile this information in a timely manner and make it readily available to the public.



California Gov. Jerry Brown has done more to fight climate change than perhaps any other elected official in the United States. So what accounts for the environmentalists heckling him during speeches and planning to confront him Saturday at an Oakland March for Real Climate Leadership? One... (Mark Hertsgaard)

Industry spokesmen point out that by and large, the protected wells drain into aquifers that already have significant levels of pollution; they downplay suggestions that this groundwater would be used for irrigation or drinking. No one should be buying that argument. The technology for treating water is continually improving, and the state's drought has led to calls for using aquifers once considered too dirty to tap.

The resources division must move swiftly to close wells that were supposed to be protected, even those it believes the EPA may exempt in the future. If the EPA eventually agrees, the wells can be reopened. For now, conserving potentially useful water should be a top priority.

The division has vowed to overhaul its sloppy operations. Gov. Jerry Brown should appoint an independent overseer to make sure it does so quickly. This page has called previously for a moratorium on new fracking operations until the state has thoroughly studied their safety; that's increasingly seeming like a wise idea.

The official California yard
Go water-wise because
Californians Don't Waste 



07A25B

Triunfo officials study drought, cell towers

By Sylvie Belmond
The Acorn 2/12/2015

Even as the rain came down outside Jan. 26, Triunfo Sanitation District officials met inside Oak Park Library to contemplate the ongoing drought and what it holds for the coming year.

Unless the wet season brings abundant rainfall, the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada will not be sufficient to end the drought in California, officials say.

To help local residents conserve, Triunfo will host a waterwise gardening workshop and vendor fair at the Oak Park Community Center from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sat., Feb. 21.

The event is free and open to the public. Among other topics, the workshop will explain how to evaluate and design a yard that will conserve water and how to use rainwater as a resource. Vendors will also offer advice on water-saving landscaping.

“We hope to get a good turnout,” Director Mike Paule said.

At the meeting Jan. 26, district officials appointed James Wall as chair of the board for 2015. Mike Paule was chosen as vice chair. Directors Steven Iceland and Janna Orkney were absent.

The board then approved a 6.5 percent annual rate increase for sanitation services. The price hike will take effect in July 2016 and continue at the same rate through 2020.

Triunfo provides sewer and wastewater treatment for Oak Park, North Ranch, Lake Sherwood, Westlake and Bell Canyon, and it oversees potable water services in Oak Park. Since the district has no employees, it subcontracts with the Ventura Regional Sanitation District (VRSD) for operations and customer service.

Triunfo officials approved a new 10-year contract with the regional district. The agreement will require approval from the regional district before it can go into effect.

Directors also considered a request by the Sprint wireless company to upgrade a cellular facility on the Killburn water tank. Sprint leases space at the site from Triunfo. If approved by the Ventura County Planning Commission, the new monopole will be 53 feet tall, 5 feet higher than the existing one.

A representative for Sprint said the new antennas will provide increased data speed and cell coverage for Oak Park.

With multiple cell carriers using the tank property, Triunfo officials said they would prefer to limit the monopole to 50 feet. Paule said that, ideally, cell carriers would share monopoles to reduce the number of unsightly structures around the tank.

“This is kind of a sensitive area. We have a lot of antennas up there and a lot of neighbors who’ve expressed concerns over the years,” Paule said.

Triunfo directors urged the applicant to work with a neighboring homeowners association and the Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council to make sure the concerns of residents are addressed.

“We’ve really been wrestling with this, and I understand as technology changes we want to give the carriers the ability to provide the service. But the board also wants to make sure the blight of antennas doesn’t get worst,” Paule said.

The three board members who were present at the meeting voted 3-0 to approve the new cell facility. The project will now go to the Ventura County Planning Commission for further review.

Letters

Water for free

David Hetzel, Port Hueneme

I find it very interesting that the water treatment plant in Oxnard seems to discharge the processed ultra-clean water into the sea.

While awaiting arrangements for installing piping to move the water to farmers, I suggest farmers be allowed to obtain the treated water from the plant. They should be able to obtain it in their own watering trucks. I think to help the farmers with the extra expense of going to the treatment plant with their trucks and hauling the water back to the farm, that the water be given to them for free.

In a small way, this would help with drought conditions. It would allow farmers to water their farms more economically and we'd all benefit. They would have to draw less water from wells.

The cleaned water would not all be wasted by releasing it into the sea.

Let's do this ASAP, while we await technology to improve the situation.

This would be a small step for mankind.

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High levels of benzene found in fracking waste water



Oil pumps and drilling equipment in an oil field in Kern County, where the majority of California's oil and gas production is centered. A year's worth of data from tests on water coming out of hundreds of fracked wells found high concentrations of benzene, a human carcinogen. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By JULIE CART
LA TIMES 2/11/2015

Levels of benzene up to 700 times the federal standard have been found in waste water from fracking, data show

Hoping to better understand the health effects of oil fracking, the state in 2013 ordered oil companies to test the chemical-laden waste water extracted from wells.

Data culled from the first year of those tests found significant concentrations of the human carcinogen benzene in this so-called "flowback fluid." In some cases, the fracking waste liquid, which is frequently reinjected into groundwater, contained benzene levels thousands of times greater than state and federal agencies consider safe.

The testing results from hundreds of wells showed, on average, benzene levels 700 times higher than federal standards allow, according to a Times analysis of the state data.



The federal government will resume oil and gas leasing in California following a report released Thursday that found little scientific evidence that fracking and similar extraction techniques are dangerous. (Julie Cart)

The presence of benzene in fracking waste water is raising alarm over potential public health dangers amid admissions by state oil and gas regulators that California for years inadvertently allowed companies to inject fracking flowback water into protected aquifers containing drinking water.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency called the state's errors "shocking." The agency's regional director said that California's oil field waste water injection program has been mismanaged and does not comply with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The discovery adds urgency to a mounting list of problems at the state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, which regulates the oil and gas industry.

State officials attribute the agency's errors to chaotic record-keeping and antiquated data collection. And they emphasize that preliminary tests on nine drinking water wells have found no benzene or other contaminants.

"The problem is foundational and it's serious," said Steven Bohlen, who took over the troubled Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources seven months ago.

The Times analyzed self-reported testing results that oil well operators submitted to the state for the first time in 2014, complying with new fracking regulations that legislators approved in 2013. The law requires well operators using so-called well stimulation techniques such as fracking, steam injection and acidizing to report water testing results to an online database. It grew out of fears about health risks from chemicals used in fracking, in which a slurry of chemicals is injected underground to unlock deposits of oil or gas.

The raw data, compiled by the Center for Biological Diversity, showed that 98% of waste water samples taken from 329 fracked oil wells exceeded federal and state water quality standards for benzene concentrations.



The Bureau of Land Management on Thursday denied a Spanish company's application to build a controversial renewable energy facility in the Mojave Desert's remote Silurian Valley, deciding the sprawling project "would not be in the public interest." (Julie Cart)

The data publicly reveal, for the first time, the components of oil production fluids that companies dispose of by pumping them into underground waste wells. Those wells are now the subject of federal and state review: The state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources recently conceded that for decades it erred by allowing oil companies to dispose of drilling waste water through more than 170 disposal wells bored into aquifers that contained water classified as clean by federal law.

The EPA contends that an additional 279 disposal wells were drilled into aquifers containing water suitable for drinking if treated. An additional 48 waste wells were allowed to discharge in aquifers that lack any water quality classification, federal regulators say.

Waste disposal wells are legally required to be sited in aquifers that contain water too contaminated for human consumption or agricultural use.

The data that oil companies reported to state regulators, however, probably do not account for the full extent of benzene present in fracking flowback. Many operators failed to comply with reporting requirements. And at least 150 reported some results but either failed to test for or provided no data for benzene and a host of other dangerous contaminants.

California oil wells often produce 10 or more gallons of water for each gallon of oil that comes out of the ground. Operators dispose of drilling wastewater either by injecting it into a disposal well or dumping into a pit.

Bohlen said determining the extent of potentially illegal well placement is hampered by the agency's haphazard record keeping. Many of the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources' files, including documents that would shed light on where waste water wells are operating, exist only on paper, and each district office in the state organizes them differently, he said.

Jared Blumenfeld, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regional administrator, hesitated to call the state's record-keeping system dysfunctional "because there isn't any system."



In one of the hottest, driest places on Earth, velvety sand dunes surround dry lake beds that, with luck, fill with spring rains. Hidden waterways attract a profusion of wildlife and birds; submerged desert rivers periodically erupt in a riot of green. (Julie Cart)

Hollin Kretzmann, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, which is monitoring the injection program, said the situation is "a disaster. The aquifer information is a complete mess. They are trying to piece it all together — in some cases decades after these injections started."

The EPA has the authority to administer federal water laws, but a 1983 agreement gave California the responsibility for monitoring water quality in its injection well program.

The state is required to submit periodic reports to the EPA, but the federal agency has long complained that the documents have been late and incomplete.

An audit in 2011 exposed widespread, systemic problems and the EPA concluded that the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources had lost control of its well injection system.

The report cited concerns that included the training of inspectors, the frequency of inspections and the lack of clarity about the location of clean water sources. Bohlen said some of the issues have already been addressed.

Those problems are more troubling because oil operators are disclosing the content of the waste and authorities better understand where it is going.

In December, the EPA gave the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources until last week to submit a plan to safeguard drinking water and two years to implement much of it. The federal government has the authority to revoke California's right to manage water associated with the state's extensive oil and gas operations. In a conference call with reporters Monday, Bohlen unveiled the plan and said "we are focused on the fixes."

Blumenfeld said the EPA is directing \$500,000 to help California establish a baseline for water quality.

Environmental groups and some public health advocates are calling on authorities to test all of the affected aquifers.

Benzene is often part of the chemical cocktail — along with sand and large amounts of water — injected into oil-bearing formations to break open fissures for oil or gas to escape. Benzene also occurs naturally in some areas and may account for its presence in oil field wastewater.

Regardless of the source, benzene is potentially dangerous to humans, experts say.

Timothy Krantz, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Redlands, said that when he initially saw the levels of benzene in the test results he thought there was a reporting error. "They are just phenomenal numbers," he said.

Fracking and other well-stimulation techniques have been divisive issues in communities across the country. Some cities have banned the practice outright, and others have imposed moratoriums until more is known about effects on water quality and quantity and whether the high-pressure injections stimulate small-scale seismic activity.

The industry says that fracking is safe and that there is little evidence that water supplies have been contaminated.

Rock Zierman, chief executive of the California Independent Petroleum Assn., said the question of disposal into protected California aquifers turns on a discrepancy between what aquifers the state and the EPA deem appropriate for disposal wells.

Zierman said he's confident that the areas where the disputed disposal wells are operating will be reclassified as acceptable.

Times staff writer Doug Smith contributed to this report.

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Culprit in explosion identified

Wastewater plant blast tied to mistaken mixing in of chemical

By Kathleen Wilson
Ventura County Star 02/10/2015

The mid-November explosion at a plant outside Santa Paula has been tied to sodium chlorite, a chemical that was mistakenly mixed with residential sewage, company officials said Monday.

Regulators initially could not identify the exact substance at fault at the plant where the Santa Clara Waste Water Co. keeps an array of chemicals.

But an internal investigation now points to sodium chlorite, a water treatment agent the firm says it was using for the first time.

Company officials say the chemical interacted with human and/or vegetable waste, leading to the blast inside a truck parked at the plant at 3:45 a.m. Nov. 18.

About 1,000 gallons of the material spilled and crystallized, igniting into fire after it dried. The incident caused an evacuation of the area, crop losses and the treatment of dozens of people at local hospitals.

The truck driver vacuumed materials into the truck that created an explosive mixture, said Rick Bandelin, hazardous materials manager for the county Division of Environmental Health.

He said the chemical and the waste were carried in the same type of storage container, which may have contributed to the confusion about what was being vacuumed.

Company officials have pledged to stop accepting wastewater in those containers, as well as taking all other necessary steps to reopen the plant.

"This is an additional safeguard that will further ensure that wastewater is not inadvertently combined with a treatment product," the company said in a written response to questions from The Star.

The disclosure of the cause comes as the Ventura County Board of Supervisors considers terminating an emergency declaration for the incident Tuesday.

County officials say the cleanup has been completed. The company must submit an analysis on the root cause and methods for preventing another accident in the future, Bandelin said. The wastewater treatment plant remains closed pending an agreement with the city of Oxnard, which has stopped accepting discharges from the company.

But officials said last week that the company faces stiff tests before it will be allowed to reopen.

Oxnard city officials are resisting any quick fixes as is county Supervisor Kathy Long.

Oxnard City Manager Greg Nyhoff shut off discharges to the city sewer plant after the explosion, and readings of waste showing unacceptably high levels of radioactive elements.

City officials are now planning a top-to-bottom review of their contract with Santa Clara, rather than limiting their inspection to the radioactivity issues.

Santa Clara officials say those readings were flawed based on a preliminary data review.

Long is also urging caution regarding the plant that is under investigation by the district attorney's office. She also wants to know the condition of the pipeline used to discharge waste from the plant and through unincorporated land to Oxnard.

"For the safety of this community, this supervisor will not support reopening that plant until we have all the answers," said Long, who represents the area.

The company says wastewater that remained in the company's discharge pipeline at the time of the accident was tested under the supervision of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Results confirmed that waste material in all containers on site and left remaining in the pipeline was "nonhazardous in character," the company said.

The company had undergone an annual inspection from county environmental regulators Nov. 5, and no safety concerns were found.

Bandelin said the company did not report that it had sodium chlorite on site, but that the 30-day deadline for doing so may not have elapsed by the time of the incident.

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Rainfall splits divided state

North getting drenched while South parched

By Paul Rogers San Jose Mercury News (TNS)
Ventura County Star 02/10/2015

SAN JOSE — Lots of issues divide Northern and Southern California: The Giants vs. the Dodgers. Hollywood vs. Silicon Valley. Southern Californians say “the” before naming a freeway; northerners don’t.

Now, after this past weekend’s soaking storms, there’s a new difference emerging: the drought.

As the state faces a possible fourth year of drought, Northern California is enjoying a healthy wet winter so far, with rainfall levels at 100 percent of their historic average or above in nearly every city, and reservoirs, while still not back to normal, steadily filling. But rainfall totals in the south are anemic, and falling further behind as each major storm only drenches the northern part of the state, leaving the south dry.

If the trend continues, this summer there may be two droughts in California: a mild one in the north that most residents barely notice, and a far more severe one in the more populated southern half of the state with more fire risk, smog, desperate groundwater pumping and more strict water rationing.

“We definitely want to see more rain down here. We are getting behind,” said Eric Boldt, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Los Angeles.

How big is the rain gap?

Up to 12 inches of rain fell in some remote Northern California areas over the weekend, with most Bay Area and Northern California cities receiving 1 to 3 inches from Friday to Monday.

But over the same time, Los Angeles received just 0.02 of an inch, and Riverside and San Diego got none.

In an average year, many Bay Area cities and L.A. basin cities receive about the same amount of rain. San Jose averages 14.9 inches in a normal year, the same as Los Angeles.

This year, however, since Oct. 1, San Jose has received 11.58 inches— 134 percent of normal for early February — while L.A. has received only half as much, 5.72 inches — good for just 70 percent of normal.

Although there are a few exceptions, most areas south of Fresno are similarly dry. Irvine is at 61 percent of normal rainfall while San Francisco is at 109 percent. Riverside is at 60 percent, while Oakland is at 107 percent. Palm Springs is at 36 percent, while Sacramento is at 120 percent.

“There is a big difference,” said JayLund, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of California, Davis. “Some people in Southern California may be feeling this year like nature doesn’t like Southern California.”

The reason is largely meteorological luck, say experts.

Two of the biggest storms that have hammered Northern California were both “atmospheric rivers.” Those are the so-called “Pineapple Express” storms that race in from the tropics. Although they provide up to half of California’s rainfall every year, they also tend to be narrow, only a few hundred miles wide.

As a result, the places that are in the bull’s-eye where they come ashore get absolutely deluged. Places a few hundred miles away get nothing.

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GUEST COLUMNISTS

Facing the facts about Ventura's water supply

Daniel Cormode & Robert Chianese
Ventura County Star 2/08/2015

Monday, the Ventura City Council approved drafting a Residential Growth Management Strategy to provide a rationale to enable the council to allocate finite resources such as water, land and infrastructure costs to high-priority building projects.

Others, however, have put forward many erroneous and misleading statements concerning this vital public issue—mainly that we have plenty of water, more than we need.

Correcting this erroneous and dangerous claim becomes necessary if Ventura is not to become a headline: “A city that overbuilt itself out of water.”

Some say we have plenty of water from our current sources and list our four existing wells, Lake Casitas, and then, potentially, the State Water Project and the Metropolitan Water District. But this claim doesn't acknowledge that the drought has reduced supply from the wells and the lake.

Also, we are not now connected to either State Water or Metropolitan Water, which would be a costly, politically fraught process. Such water is purely hypothetical. The claim of “plenty of water for Ventura” collapses right out of the box.

It is also asserted that we have the “ability” to pump 25,000 acre-feet per year from the wells, an amount that exceeds our 14,824 to 16,824 current production.

But projections and actualities, in both normal times and in extreme drought, are far different matters. Strangely, the city of Ventura has not disclosed the amount of its well pumping. And crucially, we do not have a hydrological study to reveal how much water actually remains under us.

It is also claimed that we are not pumping what we now could, and that none of the basins is over drafted.

Common sense, however, would conclude that any aquifers in drought strained California are shrinking. Pointing to proposed new wells that can add to the supply fails to understand that these new wells are replacements for existing ones, not additional ones.

We are also reminded that we have rights dating to 1914 to water in the Ventura River.

That's helpful when there is any water in it. It could provide 4,000 acre feet per year in

normal times, but now we might get 0-2,000 acre-feet.

Claiming we have plenty of water flowing from Lake Casitas fails to account for evaporation and percolation added to outflow, which depletes the lake of 25,473 acre-feet per year, not the claimed figure of 16,000 acre-feet. At its current 50 percent capacity, the lake can supply Ventura with five years of its allotted water, not the claimed 15 years.

If the lake drops to 25 percent capacity, the Casitas Municipal Water District can cut supply to 55 percent for in-district use. If it dries up, we would be groundwater dependent.

Many propose water reclamation, a good though costly idea, but our 10,000 acre-feet per year of wastewater would only yield 2,900 acre-feet of potable water, due to the need to maintain the estuary and prevent brine build up. Using it to fight seawater intrusion also reduces the amount available for domestic and agricultural uses.

Desalination plants, also very costly, are coming on line along the coast and may show the best ways for a city our size to deploy them.

No distortions of our existing water supply, nor dreams about future hypothetical supplies, should be factored into the City Council's plan, the Residential Growth Management Strategy, to manage residential development in the near and distant future.

Even a return to normal rainfall will likely require years to make up what we are using now.

The city must base its water allocations for building on the actual, verifiable availability of it.

Only then will we live in a community that thrives both economically and environmentally.

Daniel Cormode, of Ventura, is chair of the Planning & Development Committee of the East Ventura Community Council. Robert Chianese, of Ventura, is a past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pacific Division.

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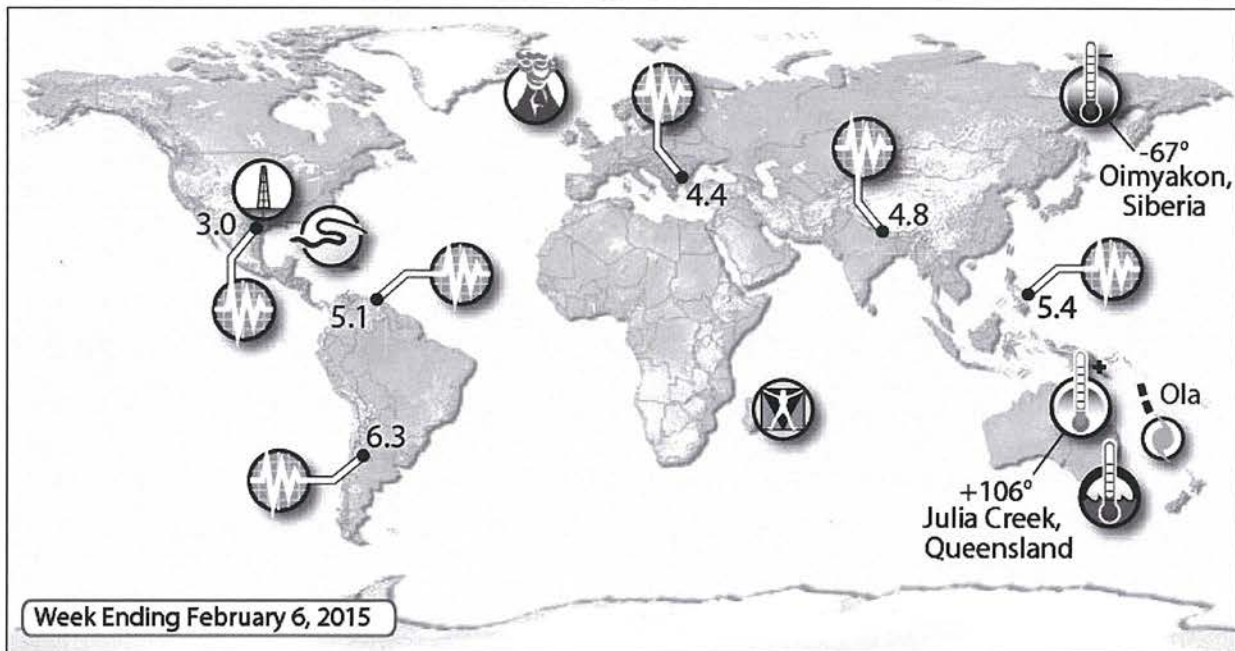
Quakes Shutter Well



State regulators shut down an injection well in north-central Oklahoma following a series of quakes suspected to be related to its operation. Injection wells are used to dispose of wastewater, laden with salt and toxic chemicals, that is produced by oil and gas wells. The use of fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, has allowed a huge expansion of gas wells across Texas, Oklahoma and southern Kansas in recent years. All three regions have experienced a sudden emergence of tremors that coincided with the new wells and their accompanying disposal operations. Dozens of studies have shown a link between the injection wells and earthquakes.

Earthweek: A Diary of the Planet

By Steve Newman



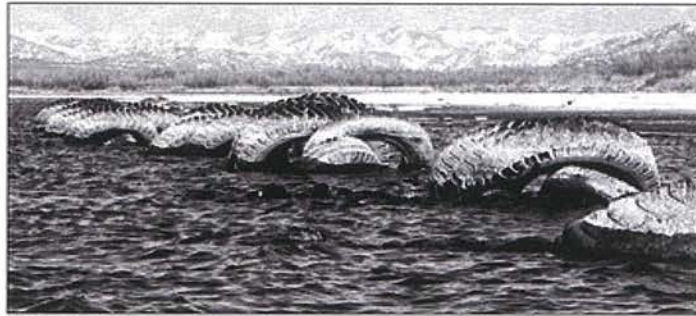
Science & Environment

Sunday, February 8, 2015

40-year-old fishhabitat surfaces at Lake Perris

Drought, dam repairs drop reservoir

By The Associated Press
Ventura County Star 2/08/15



The tractor tires used for fish habitat on the lake bottom are now visible at Lake Perris. A reef made of giant tires that was sunk 40 years ago in a southern California lake has broken surface again, thanks to the drought.
AP Photos/the Press-enterprise, terry Pierson

PERRIS — A reef made of giant tires that was sunk 40 years ago in a Southern California lake has broken the surface again, thanks to the drought.

The Riverside Press-Enterprise reported receding waters of Lake Perris have exposed dozens of tractor tires that were used to create hiding spots for fish when the lake was filled.

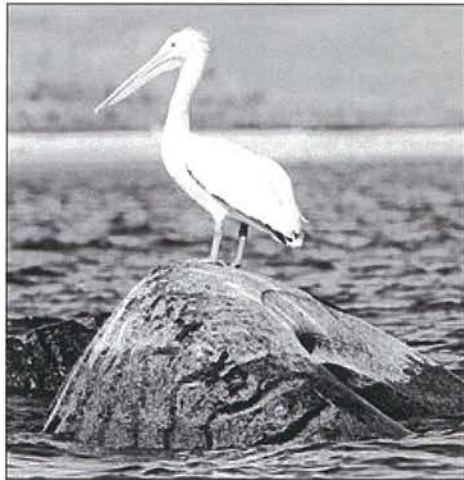
Some of the tires are 8 feet tall.

Local fishermen know the sunken reef as a prime spot to catch bass, catfish, trout and bluegill.

Sunken boats and trees also are popping up at the lake.

The water level has dropped 40 feet to its lowest point since the man-made reservoir opened in 1973.

The level was lowered to make dam repairs and also to supply drought stricken Riverside County with drinking water.



A pelican perches on one of the tractor tires used for fish habitat on Lake Perris in Perris. sunken boats and trees are also surfacing.

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Thousands protest fracking in Oakland

2 busloads from local area travel to event

From staff and wire reports
Ventura County Star 2/08/2015

OAKLAND— Thousands of environmental and labor activists took to the streets of Jerry Brown's hometown Saturday carrying signs and chanting slogans with a simple message for the governor: end fracking.

The marchers called on Brown to "stop fracking" with people's health and "follow the science," saying the governor's legacy as an environmental leader was at stake if he didn't ban the practice.

"The governor has done a lot of really good things for the environment," said Richard Gray, 71, a retired landscape designer from Marin County. "But fracking seems to be a blind spot for him."

Gray held a sign with an image of the governor pointing to his head and the words, "Climate Leaders Use Their Brains."

California is the No. 3 oil producer in the nation and has added an average of 300 wells each month for the past decade. About half of them are using hydraulic fracturing or fracking, a technique that involves injecting water, sand and chemicals to break apart underground rocks so oil and gas can escape.

Environmentalists say numerous studies show fracking is worsening climate change, exacerbating California's historic drought and jeopardizing the health of residents. They have clashed with Brown, who was a darling of the environmental movement in the 1970s when he ended tax breaks for oil companies and promoted solar energy, but had his name interchanged with Chevron and big oil during chant at Saturday's protest.

Brown's administration says that so far there is no direct evidence of harm from fracking in California. The state has "the most imaginative and aggressive and integrated strategy to deal with climate change of any political jurisdiction in the Western hemisphere," the governor said at a news conference on Friday.

But Brown said the state's residents continue to consume oil, so either California has to produce it itself or get it elsewhere.

Among the crowd at Saturday's march was Oxnard resident Tom Morales Rebecchi, Food and Water Watch's Ventura County organizer. Rebecchi said the event revitalized the crowd's mission to stand up to oil companies and end fracking.

The Oxnard organizer said about two busloads of 100 residents from Ventura and

Santa Barbara counties participated in the march. They were singing songs on the drive up there and the event itself was full of “good vibes,” Rebecchi said.

“We have to clean up our area and bring awareness to the danger of fracking,” Rebecchi said.

Rebecchi said he and others from local environmental groups plan on attending a hearing intended for public commentary Tuesday to express concern about fracking at the Sespe Oil Field near Fillmore.

Members of the Ventura County Climate Hub, Ventura 350, Ventura League of United Latin American Citizens as well as the local chapter of Food and Water Watch planned to participate in the Oakland anti fracking march.

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People in the News



The Calabasas Chamber of Commerce installed their new Board of Directors for 2015. Pictured (above l-r) **Ron Supancic**, Director; **Kari Souza-Contreras**, Director; **David Glucksman**, Director; **Andrea Roschke**, Vice Chair Finance; **Bonnie Mulholland**, First Vice Chair; **Jacqueline Souza**, Chairman of the Board; **Dana Rolland**, Director; **Jeanne Garrison**, Vice Chair Business Development; **Jeff Reinhardt**, Director; **Saleem Saleem**, Director and **Dr. Jerry Vener**, Director.

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