

# NEWS CLIPS

Published March 20, 2015



**Resource Conservation and Public Outreach**

Organized by date

# State to speed up drought relief

*Governor defends actions so far in crisis*

By Timm Herdt  
Ventura County Star 3/20/2015

SACRAMENTO — Joined by legislative leaders from both parties, Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday announced emergency drought-relief action that will speed the allocation of more than \$1 billion in bond funds for water projects.

He then was immediately peppered with questions asking why the state isn't doing more to address its mounting drought crisis.

The State Water Resource Control Board this week took action that will require all urban water suppliers to limit residential irrigation this summer, but the Brown administration so far has stopped short of demanding more severe rationing measures.

"The Water Board is acting at a pace they think makes sense," Brown said. "When you bring down the hammer and when you don't, it's a judgment call. If the drought continues, there will be a building sense of emergency."

After fielding questions from reporters about why his administration isn't taking more dramatic actions more quickly, Brown appeared to grow frustrated.

"You can say, 'Go faster,' but there are limits," Brown told one reporter. "You type faster than we manage."

The actions announced Thursday mean the Legislature will appropriate hundreds of millions of dollars from last fall's \$7.1 billion water bond very soon, perhaps in the next few weeks, rather than wait until the 2015-16 state budget is adopted in July.

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles, said additional appropriations will be included when the budget is passed.

"We cannot wait until June," he said. "This is just a down payment, just the first round. The governor has asked us to approve additional funds later in the budget cycle, and we will do that."

He said the first round of allocations will go to projects such as recycling and groundwater desalination projects "that are ready now and only need funding to get started."

Senate Republican leader Bob Huff, of Diamond Bar, noted that the water bond, which was placed on the ballot last year with broad bipartisan support from lawmakers, was largely designed to address long-term needs. Indeed, the largest single item was for water storage, and construction of dams and reservoirs will take years.

Huff and other state leaders said they will do what they can to address the short-term crisis, but getting through the drought will take the active involvement of all Californians.

“Everyone in the state has to ask the question, ‘How can I conserve more water?’” he said.

Brown, too, called upon Californians to do what they can.

“This is a struggle, and it’s something we’re going to have to live with — for how long, we’re not sure,” he said. “We’re going to meet it the best we can, by pulling together.”

Brown noted that it takes time for people to come to grips with what he called “an unprecedented” situation, but that he believes the reality is sinking in that water conservation is a statewide imperative.

“It is time for California to pull together,” he said. “People rise to the occasion, and I’m confident Californians will.”

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/20/2015

# How \$1 billion in California drought plan would be spent

By The Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 3/20/2015

SACRAMENTO— Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders are proposing legislation to accelerate more than \$1 billion in water spending.

Here are the highlights of the plan:

## **FLOOD CONTROL**

n \$660 million from a 2006 voter-approved bond measure would be spent to shore up flood control structures to prevent mudslides, levee failures and flash floods. What does flooding have to do with droughts? Lawmakers say extreme weather means sudden storms can overtake communities, even in dry years, and flood safeguards protect drinking water supplies.

## **CLEAN WATER**

n \$137.2 million would be spent from a 2014 water bond measure to support local water recycling and desalination projects. Brown has proposed \$6 million for desalination, among the most expensive ways to make drinking water.

n \$136 million from the 2014 measure would help small and low-income communities boost drinking water supplies by digging new wells, connecting to nearby supplies or other steps.

## **REDUCING WATER USE**

n \$30 million comes from charges on businesses that emit pollution. A third of that money would go to farmers to cut down on water while irrigating crops. The remainder would be distributed by the Department of Water Resources which has used similar funds to buy turbines to reduce water and energy use in the state's vast system of canals and reservoirs.

n \$6.7 million would go to support the State Water Resources Control Board's enforcement of emergency drought regulations. The board has prohibited Californians from watering their lawns daily and letting sprinklers run onto streets and sidewalks.

## **DROUGHTVICTIMS**

n \$24 million would be spent on food assistance in drought-stricken counties dealing with high unemployment and lines at food banks.

n \$19.9 million would go to the state's emergency drinking water program.

n \$16.6million would be spent to protect fish and wildlife in habitats endangered by the drought.



## United Water district restarts bid for chief

By Gretchen Wenner  
Ventura County Star 3/20/2015

The board of a key local groundwater district is restarting efforts to find a new general manager.

Michael Solomon, the retiring chief executive of United Water Conservation District, will stay on the job for three to four more months, he said Thursday.

The district owns and manages major facilities, including Lake Piru, that support cities and farmers downstream. Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, Santa Paula and Fillmore pump groundwater managed by the district, and Oxnard and Port Hueneme receive some drinking supplies from United. In addition, agricultural operations along the Santa Paula River and on the Oxnard Plain rely on United to replenish groundwater pumped to irrigate crops, making the agency central to Ventura County's \$2 billion agriculture industry.

United's board recently interviewed five potential successors and was interested in one, "but couldn't negotiate an agreement that was acceptable," said Solomon, who turns 58 this week.

He believes the board of the Santa Paula-based agency will bump up the salary range by about \$20,000, pushing the top number to about \$250,000 a year.

"It's getting harder to find people with experience," he said. Many high-ranking water officials are retiring, he said, and some don't want to leave jobs where they have seniority.

"Recruitments are tough all over the state," he said.

United is facing a tangle of complex issues: Endangered Species Act requirements due to fish habitat, expensive infrastructure improvements, an invasive quagga mussel infestation, the possible continuation of a rate lawsuit filed by the city of Ventura and new state laws affecting groundwater management.

Agencies up and down the state typically face one or two of the same problems, Solomon noted.

"We have them all," he said.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/20/2015

## 'Brockovich' town to lose last store, post office

*For Hinkley, tainted water, fear take toll*

By The Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 3/20/2015

HINKLEY — A Mojave Desert community whose toxic chromium contamination was portrayed in the movie "Erin Brockovich" is set to lose its post office, plus its only gas station and convenience store.

Although postal officials say they will be looking for a new location, the Hinkley Post Office, which has been at the same address since 1958, will close Friday.

The number of street deliveries in Hinkley has dropped by nearly 38 percent — from 504 in 2012 to 321 in 2015, U.S. Postal Service spokesperson Eva M. Jackson told the San Bernardino Sun newspaper for a story Wednesday. Rented boxes have dropped 76 percent, to 75 from 321, during the same period, she said.



The post office in Hinkley is set to close Friday. The community whose toxic chromium contamination was portrayed in the movie "Erin Brockovich" will also lose its only gas station and convenience store. Hinkley's population has been dwindling for years. ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Hinkley's population has been dwindling for years as the community struggled with concerns over the cancer-causing chromium-6 in well water.

During the 1950s and 1960s, PG& E used chromium- 6 to kill algae and protect the metal at its Hinkley natural gas pumping station. Decades later, residents blamed their illnesses on a growing plume of contaminated groundwater.

The utility reached a \$333 million settlement with residents in a case portrayed in the hit 2000 film "Erin Brockovich," starring Julia Roberts.

Business at the convenience store — the Hinkley Market — collapsed after the nearby Hinkley Elementary School closed in June 2013, the newspaper said. The school shut down because of dwindling enrollment. The market and gas station will close at the end of April.

"It's another blow to the community," said Lester White, a longtime community advocate, of the loss of the town's only storefront.

The land parcel containing the gas station, market and post office is owned by Barstow resident Tawfig A. Musitef, who could not be reached for comment.

PG& E spokesman Jeff Smith told the Sun that the company is in negotiations to buy the parcel. "Not all the 'i's have been dotted and the 't's crossed," but we are working toward a sale," Smith said.

PG& E has been buying residential properties in Hinkley for decades as people seek to relocate.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/20/2015



## No, California won't run out of water in a year



In January 2014, cattle rancher Rob Frost surveys the remains of an animal that died due to drought conditions on grazing land near Santa Paula, where the grass is normally 6 to 10 inches high this time of year. Frost says in an ordinary year he will lose 1% of his cattle to natural causes but... (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

By [TONY BARBOZA](#)

LA Times 3/20/2015

California's water situation is troubling, but experts say decades worth of groundwater remain

Lawmakers are proposing [emergency legislation](#), state officials are [clamping down on watering laws](#) and, as California enters a fourth year of drought, some are worried that the state could run out of water.

State water managers and other experts said Thursday that California is in no danger of running out of water in the next two years, even after an extremely dry January and paltry snowpack. Reservoirs will be replenished by additional snow and rainfall between now and the next rainy season, they said. The state can also draw from other sources, including groundwater supplies, while imposing tougher conservation measures.

"We have been in multiyear droughts and extended dry periods a number of times in the past, and we will be in the future," said Ted Thomas, a spokesman for the California Department of Water Resources. "In periods like this there will be shortages, of course, but the state as a whole is not going to run dry in a year or two years."

The headline of a recent Times op-ed article offered a blunt assessment of the situation: "California has about one year of water left. Will you ration now?"

Jay Famiglietti, senior water scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a professor at UC Irvine, wrote about the state's dwindling water resources [in a March 12 column](#), citing satellite data that have shown sharp declines since 2011 in the total amount of water in snow, rivers, reservoirs, soil and groundwater in California.



In an interview Thursday, Famiglietti said he never claimed that California has only a year of total water supply left.



Given the historic low temperatures and snowfalls that pummeled the eastern U.S. this winter, it might be easy to overlook how devastating California's winter was as well. ( Jay Famiglietti )

He explained that the state's reservoirs have only about a one-year supply of water remaining. Reservoirs provide only a portion of the water used in California and are designed to store only a few years' supply. But the online headline [generated great interest](#). Famiglietti said it gave some the false impression that California is at risk of exhausting its water supplies.

The satellite data he cited, which measure a wide variety of water resources, show "we are way worse off this year than last year," he said. "But we're not going to run out of water in 2016," because decades worth of groundwater remain.

Still, the state's abysmal snowpack and below-average reservoir levels could exacerbate the overpumping of already depleted groundwater reserves — a problem detailed in an [in-depth Los Angeles Times article](#) Wednesday.

There's little debate that the state's water situation is troubling, but there is some improvement from last year. Water levels in some of the state's largest reservoirs in Northern California are higher than last year at this time, largely because of big December storms. But some smaller Southern California reservoirs aren't doing so well and have lower reserves than a year ago.



Severe drought conditions reveal over 600 empty docks sitting on dry, cracked dirt at Folsom Lake Marina. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

The Department of Water Resources did not have a readily available estimate of the total water supply in California or the amount expected to be used over the next year.

Just because California is not exhausting its water supply "doesn't mean we're not in a crisis," said Leon Szeptycki, executive director of the Water in the West program at Stanford University, who called the state's snowpack, at 12% of average, "both bad for this year but also a troubling sign for the future."

State officials said stricter conservation measures, including watering restrictions for cities and big cuts in water deliveries to San Joaquin Valley farmers, will help reduce the drain on reservoirs.

Madelyn Glickfeld, director of the UCLA Water Resources Group at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, said the drought is so serious that stricter conservation measures are urgently needed. "But I'm confident California's government will not let this get to the point where water is not coming out of peoples' faucets."

**ALSO:**

**[Gov. Brown, lawmakers plan short- and long-term strategy on drought](#)**

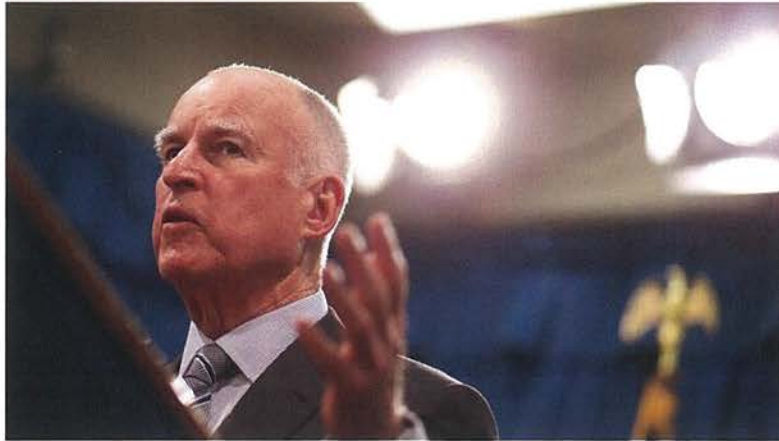
**[California's \\$1-billion emergency drought relief is tiny drop in bucket](#)**

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

3/20/2015

Editorial

## Water restrictions are just a taste of what's to come for California



Gov. Jerry Brown speaks during a news conference Thursday to announce emergency drought legislation in California. (Justin Sullivan / Getty Images)

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

LA TIMES 3/20/2015

State's new water restrictions are a near-term solution, but further steps are required to deal with drought

Action on Tuesday by the State Water Resources Control Board to restrict lawn watering and home car-washing made big news outside of California but barely raised eyebrows in-state. That's because most urban agencies had already imposed those kinds of limits more than a year ago. Californians responded initially with big water savings but let the hoses and sprinklers run again toward the end of last year, as the Sierra snow began to fall and it was easier to hope — to pretend — that the dry times were behind us.

It's clear now that's not the case. This winter was a bit wetter than last, but that's not saying much. There has been too little precipitation to replenish the reservoirs and aquifers that water users have been drawing down during the dry times. There's enough water for the coming year and the year after that besides — but not at the current rate of use, and certainly not if wet winters don't resume.

Stored water is a kind of bank account meant to get users through an arid year or two, but it cannot be expected to preserve the state through an extended drought like the one that afflicted Australia for a decade and a half beginning in the 1990s. Australians



didn't know, the first couple years in, that their dry streak would go on for so long. By year four, though, the drought's historic nature had become clear. In this fourth year of drought here, Californians must begin using water as though they are still at the front end of that sort of cataclysm.



They don't like to hear this kind of talk in the rich agricultural lands of the Imperial Valley, but the Salton Sea was a big mistake. It was dry desert land before 1905, when the Colorado River punched through poorly constructed irrigation levees and flowed for two years into a giant... ( The Times editorial board )

So the water board's action shouldn't be taken as the last word on restrictions. Soon the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California will limit deliveries to its customers, including the city of Los Angeles, which must consider whatever alternative supplies are at its disposal and then impose additional mandates accordingly. Other water agencies are doing the same.

Australia responded to the so-called millennium drought by permanently changing the way it produces and delivers water, becoming a global leader in recycling and conserving. California has dabbled in such things for decades, but it's now evident that the state must do Australia-style rethinking and move quickly to Australia-style action. The \$1-billion emergency measures announced Thursday by Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders are fine for near-term relief, but fall far short of what's needed to respond to what may well be our own millennium drought.

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

3/20/2015

## Water or not, build it and they will come

We're in a terrible Catch-22 and there's no way out, it seems.

Are we in a drought or are we not?

According to state and local authorities, the water shortage has grown to epic proportions and mandatory cutbacks are just one toilet flush away. The consequences are dire, we're being told. Drastic steps must be taken now.

Meanwhile, "solutions" are emerging at a rapid pace.

Water districts have developed a billing system in which thirsty customers pay more and those who reduce their consumption pay less. There's been harsh rhetoric and the threat of fines, and rationing could go into effect as soon as this summer, or so we're told.

But unless the boy is crying wolf, there must be adequate supplies somewhere. How else will there be enough to drink?

Each time a new home is built or a new office or shopping center opens its doors, the demand for water increases.

With new construction allowed to continue—two more hotels and almost 70 homes will likely be built on Las Virgenes Road in Calabasas—we have to assume the supply is meeting the demand. It must.

The normal laws of economic consumption, however, do not apply here.

The delivery system and supplies from Northern California haven't improved all that much in the last half-century. In fact, there's less water available today due to the drought. Yet local developments keep coming and the need for water keeps growing.

Clearly, our public planners must have known that Southern California is little more than a desert that cannot survive without imported water and that even in the best of times, things can be stretched only so far. But keep in mind that many commercial and residential entitlements in the area were approved before the drought reached its current nasty state.

Today, it's full steam ahead, regardless of the drought.

While the growing economy beckons, the water that's needed to support all the new projects just isn't there. And while the trend toward new development continues, so does the teeth-gnashing by the very policy makers and water purveyors who put these wheels into motion in the first place. Their "build now, find water later" mentality is just the kind of flawed thinking that got us into this mess.

It is indeed a Catch-22, and it is quite maddening.

The best we can do is to continue our strict conservation efforts, but at some point there will be a price to pay. A very big price.



## Drought basics

Are we in a drought? According to the news media, we're in one of the worst droughts in this state's history. Some call it the "mega drought" or the "100- year drought."

All of us are being encouraged to conserve every precious drop of water. Mandatory water rationing that includes hefty fines and penalties if you're caught watering your lawn or plants more than twice a week are certain to be implemented this year.

I don't know if I believe in "climate change" or "ozone depletion," but I do believe this state is in a drought and I do believe it's a bad one that isn't going to end anytime soon.

Call me kooky, but I don't believe the priorities of developers and their ambitious building plans should be put before the needs of this city's residents.

We do not need a huge hotel and a sprawling residential development along the 101 Freeway right now.

If our elected officials at city hall, our council members and our planning department officials can't see the hypocrisy of approving such a development in these dry times, then maybe we need to vote for some new candidates who will.

**Brad Stein**  
**Calabasas**

**Letter**

**Drought basics**

I have become aware of the proposed water treatment system that is underway in Oak Park, which will involve the block of Kanan Road between Conifer and Smoketree.

I attended the MAC meeting on March 9 and found that although none of the residents directly impacted by this extreme plan were advised of the plan, the proposed plan is well underway and will soon be implemented.

More than \$7,000 has already been authorized to pay for the removal of trees recently planted in the outer-center dividers of the roadway. We had not been offered this information up to this date nor were we offered the opportunity to be heard regarding our response.

I live at the proposed Kanan Road site and I am totally against this part of the plan to treat the runoff water.

Surely there are other, better options that would not impact the main Kanan Road entrance-exit.

The MAC will be meeting again on March 24. They need to know that those of us most involved are not in favor of the plan.

**Barbara De Minico**  
**Oak Park**

## Worried about development

I commend *The Acorn* for bringing attention to the proposed developments known as Canyon Oaks and Rondell Oasis in the issue of March 12.

Your coverage was very fair and straightforward, presenting the facts as they are known.

The one exception was the comment that Las Virgenes Road will have to be widened to accommodate the new traffic. That project is a separate one and its construction start is pending.

The comments below are mine alone but I feel that my comments reflect the feelings of many residents as testified by the comments of those residents on the website NextDoor.com.

Both of these proposed projects include four-story hotels, each about 50 feet high. That clearly exceeds the Calabasas Building Code's limit of 35 feet, at least as I understand it.

That is why both proposals include a request for variances, or at least exceptions, to that code.

Neither seem to comply with the spirit nor the requirements of the Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan and the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone planning guides.

The view of the hills behind both the hotel and the new residential mesa will be obliterated for the proposed Canyon Oaks development as seen from the Las Virgenes Road and Agoura Road intersection.

The Rondell Oasis proposal also includes a four-story hotel, but no residential component, and will also block the view of the mountains in the rear of the hotel as seen from the eastbound off-ramp from the 101 Freeway.

This concern could be mitigated by reducing the number of stories and by making better use of the unused airspace over the entire property.

I urge the City of Calabasas to use due diligence in looking very closely at these proposals, and to respect the wishes of those of us who live and work in the western area of the city.



The end result of all these developments could well be an urban canyon like there is on the north side of Park Sorrento between Parkway Calabasas and the City Hall.

Many of us wish to retain its present rural atmosphere as it represents the final frontier for Calabasas.

**Carl Ehrlich**  
**Calabasas**

## ***Water district keeps residents in the know***

**OPERATIONS —** Deborah Peters of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District guides visitors on a recent tour of the Tapia water reclamation plant near Calabasas. The water district is making improvements to many of its facilities. The work includes a new biosolids digester at the Rancho Las Virgenes composting plant, a complete refurbishment of the 8-million gallon Calabasas water tank, silt removal at one of the district's large reservoirs, and final phase construction of the new 5-million gallon water storage tank in Westlake Village.



## Oak Park pollution measures questioned

By Sylvie Belmont



CLEAN WATER—Above, an example of a biofilter. Below, the MAC's Mike McReynolds points to a location.

Oak Park residents and council members are objecting to a Ventura County project that would reduce pollution in local waterways.

At a meeting last week, members of the Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council and a halfdozen residents worried that 30 trees along Kanan Road would have to be removed in order to install biofilters that would purify the community's water runoff. They also said they weren't given sufficient notice of the project.

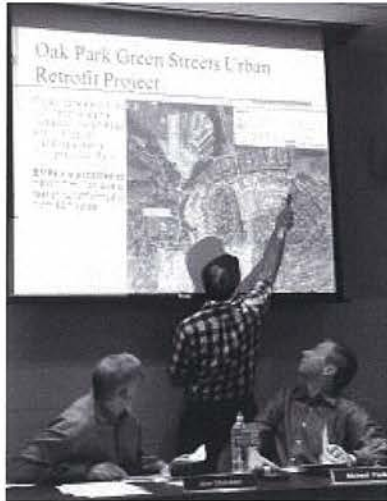
In a presentation on March 10, Ventura County Public Works staff members said that the county would install the filters on the side of Kanan Road between Mae Boyar Park and Smoke Tree Avenue, as well as 10 other biofiltration systems throughout Oak Park.

The project is intended to reduce bacteria and other pollutants in the watershed. Because tree roots would interfere with the biofilters, 600 square feet of turf and 30 trees would have to be removed and replaced with drought-resistant plants.

The county allocated \$7,500 to plant new trees on the front lawns of private properties along Kanan if property owners want them.

Installation of the biofilters will cost \$1.8 million. The state will contribute \$1.4 million, and the county will pay the rest, said Ewelina Mutkowska, stormwater program manager for Ventura County. To receive state funding the county must proceed with the work this summer.





SYLVIE BELMOND/Acorn Newspapers

### **Reasons for the project**

Oak Park and other communities are required to comply with strict federal guidelines in eliminating contaminants from the Malibu Creek watershed.

“It’s critical to clean up the water in Medea Creek. We’re mostly concerned with bacteria levels,” Mutkowska said.

David Kirby, a water quality engineer, said the filtering units will be placed in areas where E. coli levels exceed allowable limits. He said over-watering, pet waste and swimming pool discharges are among the most common sources of pollutants.

Council members raised concerns about the lack of public notice, maintenance costs and the proposed tree removals. They said they would have liked to have known about the project earlier in the planning stage rather than hearing about it so late in the process.

Councilmember Mike Paule said the trees along Kanan were planted to create a visual buffer and reduce noise and pollution for residents.

“We want the residents to be aware of what’s going on,” he said. Paule serves on the Oak Park Landscape Committee and the Triunfo Sanitation District.

The state does not provide funding for maintenance of the biofilters and landscaping. The county has yet to determine how the \$35,000 in annual maintenance will be paid for.

“To do a project with such impact, you need to have a longterm plan,” Paule said.

Three residents also spoke on the issue.

Janna Orkney said the project should be shelved until the public has had a chance to provide feedback.

"I like this project, just not in this location," said Orkney, a board member with the Triunfo Sanitation District. She expressed concern that the biofilters could pose a hazard for children.

Barbara DeMinico, an Oak Park resident who lives on Kanan Road, objected that she wasn't informed about the work.

"This is not proper. This is the main entry into Oak Park," DeMinico said.

Resident Derek Ross said the county is relying on data that was gathered before the drought.

"Is this really necessary based on information that we're gathering now and not information gathered in the past?" Ross said.

Kirby said pollutants are an issue regardless of the amount of irrigation or rainfall.

He also said door-hangers had been distributed throughout the community to inform residents of the project.

After an hour long presentation, representatives of the county's public works agency agreed to give consideration to the council's concerns. They will come to the next council meeting on Tues., March 24.

Jeff Pratt, director of the Ventura County Public Works Agency, told *The Acorn* that the runoff treatment project is for the benefit of the Oak Park community,

"This is not a county project, this is an Oak Park project to clean dirty water there," he said.

If the bio filters aren't installed now, the county will lose the grant, and Oak Park residents will either face expensive penalties from the regional water quality board or pay more for another project down the line.

"This is a \$1.4-million gift. It is clear pollution comes from properties" in Oak Park, Pratt said.

"People need to understand they're part of the problem and this is a solution that is lots cheaper than future alternatives to clean waterways," he said.

# Even / Odd Irrigation Program In Effect

*No Irrigation on Sundays*



In response to the state's drought emergency, the LVMWD Board of Directors has adopted an even-odd irrigation schedule. Addresses ending with even numbers may irrigate only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; odd-numbered addresses may irrigate only on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Irrigation may occur after 5:00 p.m. and before 10:00 a.m. Clip and post next to your irrigation timer or give to your landscape professional.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Even Addresses							
Odd Addresses							



## Town is conserving water by any means

### Well issues lead residents to get serious

By The Associated Press

SHAVER SPRINGS — Well problems in one small community bordering the Sierra National Forest in Central California are forcing residents to take water conservation seriously.

In Shaver Springs east of Fresno, some home owners have replaced lawns with decks and started collecting shower and rainwater running off their rooftops, The Fresno Bee reported Tuesday, adding that most flush their toilets only when necessary.

“They do self-imposed restrictions to make sure they don’t run out of water,” said John Thompson, resources director of Fresno County’s public works and planning department. “They understand they have a major issue.”

The problem is that one community well is contaminated with naturally occurring radiation-type elements from the granite, officials said, and too little rain has fallen to replenish a second well. Residents are relying on water provided by a neighbor.

Finding a new water source could cost up to \$3 million, the newspaper reports.

Until then, residents monitor a community whiteboard, where officials post the percentage of water remaining in the community tanks.

Resident Tom Boswell rigged a system to capture rain running off his rooftops. Despite the small amount that has fallen, Boswell said he filled up two 50-gallon barrels.

He started to take steps to conserve water about two years ago, but with as the drought wears on, more of his neighbors are doing the same, Boswell said. “We’re really concerned here,” he said. Resident Larry Paquette said he keeps a bucket in his shower to collect cold water that flows before turning hot, and he also collects hot water. He uses it for gardening.

Next week, county supervisors are expected to impose water restrictions on the 70 homes in Shaver Springs that will limit watering landscapes, washing cars and building permits.

“People for the most part are trying to do the right thing,” Paquette said.



tom Boswell demonstrates how his new rain recovery system works at trapping rainwater from the roof into 50-gallon drums, then used to water landscaping in shaver springs. some homeowners have replaced lawns with decks and started collecting shower and rainwater running off their rooftops, the Fresno Bee reported tuesday. AssociAted press File

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015  
Powered by TECNAVIA

3/19/2015

Across The State

Sacramento

## State to announce more drought plans

Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders on Thursday will unveil a new effort to deal with the state's punishing drought.

Brown, along with Senate President Pro Tem Kevin De Leon and Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, both Democrats, will introduce emergency drought legislation, Brown's office said Wednesday evening. The governor's office did not elaborate on details of the plan.

This is the second consecutive year in which the Legislature has had to act on emergency drought relief. In 2014, Brown signed a \$687.4-million drought package, which offered aid to communities facing acute water shortages and food and housing assistance to those harmed by the drought.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/19/2015



## Local Briefs

### Ventura County

## Council releases watershed plan

The Ventura River Watershed Council has passed a comprehensive plan detailing how to improve the health and sustainability of the 226 square miles that drain into the river.

The council of government agencies, nonprofit groups, businesses, community groups and individuals has spent the past two years preparing the watershed management plan. It approved the plan this month.

The watershed extends from Upper Matilija Canyon and Upper Ojai down through the Ojai Valley to the coast of Ventura.

The plan identifies and prioritizes water-related concerns in the watershed, outlines a strategy to solve shared watershed problems and puts the council in a better position to get grants and other funding.

The council hopes the plan will serve “as a reference in support of many causes that benefit the watershed, including grant applications for watershed projects and programs,” Ron Merckling, public affairs manager for the Casitas Municipal Water District, said in a news release.

The plan can be viewed at [http:// venturawatershed.org/ the-watershed-plan](http://venturawatershed.org/the-watershed-plan).

Those who want to learn more about the plan in person can schedule a presentation with Lorraine Walter, Ventura River Watershed coordinator. She can be reached at [lorraine@ovlc.org](mailto:lorraine@ovlc.org) or 649-6852, ext. 4.

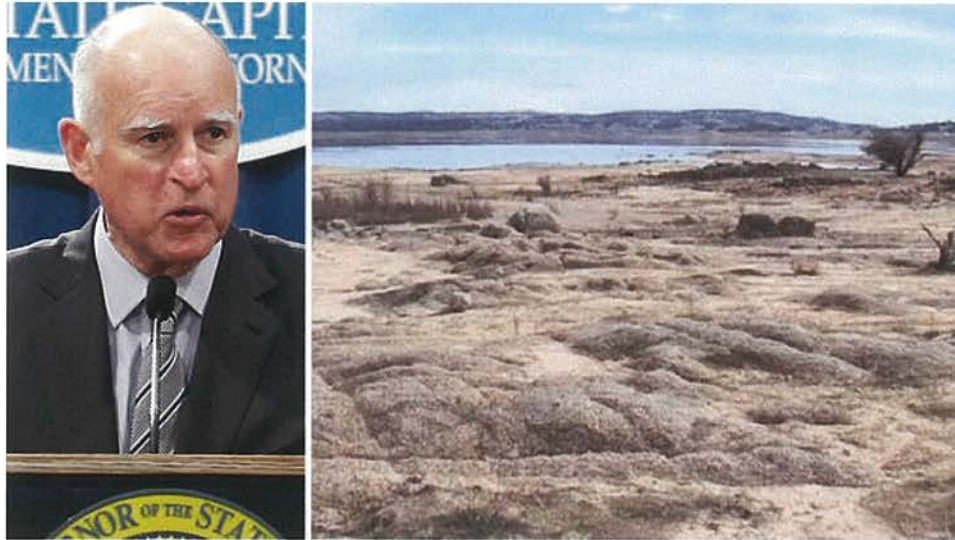
### Staff reports

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/19/2015

## California's \$1-billion emergency drought relief is tiny drop in bucket



Gov. Brown announces \$1 billion drought package

By [CHRIS MEGERIAN](#) AND [MELANIE MASON](#)  
LA Times 3/19/2015

'This is a struggle,' Gov. Brown says of California drought. 'Something we're going to have to live with'

Lawmakers tout \$1-billion drought plan but acknowledge its limitations

No matter how much longer California's drought lingers, politicians don't have the power to make it rain. So on Thursday they tried the next best thing – they proposed showering the state's parched landscape with money.

Gov. Jerry Brown and top lawmakers from both parties unveiled a \$1-billion-plus plan to improve the state's water infrastructure, provide emergency assistance to struggling communities and protect wildlife.

"This is a struggle," Brown said during a Capitol news conference. "Something we're going to have to live with. For how long, we're not sure."

Even as lawmakers touted their latest proposal, they acknowledged its limitations.

Assembly Republican leader Kristin Olsen (R-Modesto) called it a "Band-Aid" and Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins cautioned that it "will not solve our water emergency."



Only a small fraction of the proposal announced Thursday – \$27.4 million – involves new funding, which would largely be used to deliver food and water to struggling Californians in the Central Valley.

Most of the legislation involves spending bond funds already approved by voters or paying out money faster than previously scheduled, and some projects may not be completed for years.

For example, the proposal would tap the \$7.5-billion water bond approved by voters in November, spending \$272.7 million to safeguard drinking water and support recycling and desalination initiatives.

The biggest chunk of funding in the legislation does not directly address the drought at all. The proposal includes \$660 million for flood control projects, part of a bond measure that was passed a decade ago and is scheduled to expire next year.

Brown explained the inclusion of the money by warning of "extreme weather events" caused by climate change.

"And with extreme weather events, you get drought. And then all of a sudden, when you're all focused on drought, you can get massive storms that flood through these channels and overflow and cause havoc," he said.

Jay Ziegler, California policy director for the Nature Conservancy, said improving the state's levies could help replenish groundwater – which has been aggressively drained as farmers drill for water – when the rains finally return.



In January 2014, cattle rancher Rob Frost surveys the remains of an animal that died due to drought conditions on grazing land near Santa Paula, where the grass is normally 6 to 10 inches high this time of year. Frost says in an ordinary year he will lose 1% of his cattle to natural causes but... (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)



“History shows us that every time California comes out of one of these droughts, it’s with a boom and bust cycle of rain,” he said.

Brown was joined Thursday by Democratic and Republican legislative leaders in a show of broad support, and lawmakers are expected to act quickly on the proposal next week.

Senate leader Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) said more legislation would follow, calling Thursday’s announcement “just a down payment on our efforts to address the drought.”

California’s drought is entering its fourth year, and this is the second consecutive year that lawmakers have considered emergency legislation to address the problem.

In 2014, Brown signed a \$687.4-million bill to fund infrastructure projects with previously approved bond money and send aid to communities facing acute water shortages.

So far, a third of the money has been spent, which includes direct relief to residents, said Richard Stapler, spokesman for the California Natural Resources Agency.

“There is a requirement that proper oversight be given to the awarding and expenditure of the funds, which takes time,” Stapler said. “Also, construction of the projects is time-consuming.”

The latest proposal comes amid growing concern about the state's dry conditions.

On Tuesday, the State Water Board tightened its watering restrictions, telling urban agencies to limit the number of days that residents can water their yards.

Officials also warned that they will impose tougher restrictions in coming months if local agencies don't ramp up conservation efforts.

"We are not seeing the level of stepping up and ringing the alarm bells that the situation warrants," said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board.

So far, the board has stopped short of mandatory limits on water use. On Thursday, Brown didn't rule out taking the step in the future.

“When you bring the hammer down, when you don’t — it’s a judgment call,” he said. “But I’ve been asking that same question myself.”

Senate Republican leader Bob Huff (R-Diamond Bar) echoed the need for Californians to use less water.

“Everyone in the state has to ask the question - how can I conserve more water?" he said.

The state's water situation is in some respects slightly better than it was a year ago. Precipitation in key watersheds in Northern California is 81% of normal for the date. Shasta Lake, California's largest reservoir, is 58% full, compared with 45% a year ago. Lake Oroville is half full, compared with 45% at this time last year.

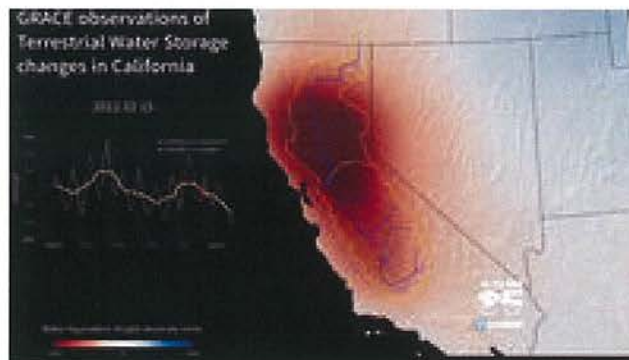
Customers of the State Water Project, which delivers supplies from Northern California to Southland cities, will get 20% of their contract requests, compared with only 5% in 2014.

But water managers are troubled by the lack of snow in the mountains, which has all but disappeared at 12% of average levels, down from 28% last year.

The mountain snowpack acts as a natural reservoir that in a normal year can hold much as a third of the state's water supply, slowly releasing it throughout the spring as seasonal water demand rises. This year that release will be a trickle.



Turning to the sea for help in drought



NASA scientist's dire drought prediction: One year of water left



# Water board tightens restrictions

## *Rules focus more on use in urban areas*

By Fenit Nirappil Associated Press  
Ventura County Star 3/18/2015

SACRAMENTO — California residents have to turn off their sprinklers, and restaurants won't give customers water unless they ask under new drought regulations approved Tuesday.

The State Water Resources Control Board has extended and expanded restrictions on water use as California enters its fourth year of drought and winter ends without significant storms or snowfall to replenish dwindling reservoirs.

The drought's effects are rippling across the state, hurting wildlife and forcing farmers to leave fields unplanted. So far this winter wildfires are burning through nearly four times as many acres as usual. The state firefighting agency reports that the dry conditions are forcing it to maintain its highest-ever level of seasonal firefighters straight through the winter.

Amid this backdrop, environmental advocates are calling on the state water board to find even more aggressive ways to slash water use, such as rationing, enforcing plumbing upgrades and going after corporate landscapes.

"The board could and should do more," said Kate Poole, a lawyer for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The state agency has conceded that its actions so far have been focused on the easier ways to immediately cut down urban water use. It voted Tuesday to extend statewide outdoor water limits imposed in July, barring washing down driveways, decorative fountains without recirculating pumps and sprinklers that spray pavement.

New rules will require local water departments to restrict the number of days residents can water their lawns. If they don't, residents must follow a state limit of twice a week. Homeowners are also barred from using sprinklers on days when it rains and for the next two days after.

Golf course owners objected to limiting days they can water grass, telling the board Tuesday that the regulation would threaten their ability to keep attractive landscapes, which they say are already water efficient.

The regulations also mandate common business conservation practices statewide. Restaurants can't offer water unless customers ask, and hotels and motels must offer guests an opportunity to decline fresh towels and sheets at hotels.

It's up to local water departments to enforce these rules, which are expected to take effect this spring. They can fine offenders \$500 per violation, but few have gone that far.

The water board also decided Tuesday that it will start tracking how agencies enforce the regulations, including the number of citations and warning letters issued.



The Associated Press found wide disparities in enforcement, from Los Angeles issuing just two \$200 fines in a service area of nearly 4 million people to Santa Cruz levying more than \$1.6 million in water waste penalties.

Meanwhile, residents have been falling short of Gov. Jerry Brown's call to slash water consumption by 20 percent when he declared a drought emergency early last year. On average, monthly water use has fallen 11 percent since the state imposed water restrictions in July, according to surveys of water suppliers.

Fearing that dry conditions may be the new way of life in California, members of the board said they must look at establishing permanent conservation rules.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/18/2015

# United Water's Ventura rates found fair

## Earlier ruling against supplier is overturned

By Arlene Martinez  
Ventura County Star 3/18/2015

The United Water Conservation District is charging the city of Ventura's commercial, residential and agricultural customers reasonable and fair rates, the 2nd District Court of Appeal ruled Tuesday.

The decision overturns a lower-court ruling that ordered the groundwater supplier to pay the city more than \$1 million for groundwater pumping overcharges for 2011-12 and 2012-13.

"We conclude that the pump charges paid by the city are neither property related fees nor taxes, that they do not exceed the district's reasonable costs of maintaining groundwater supply, and that the district allocates those costs in a fair or reasonable relationship to the city's burdens on this resource," the appeal states.

United said the courts got it right.

"We are grateful for this ruling and look forward to managing and conserving the water supply for the benefit of all of United's customers," United board President Lynn Maulhardt said in a statement.

Ventura Water General Manager Shana Epstein said officials still were evaluating the decision with counsel.

"We'll discuss the next steps with City Council," she said.

The dispute between United and Ventura, which sells the groundwater to its customers, began in 2011. The city sued United over rate increases set by the board in 2011-12 and again in 2012-13. The city's issue was the 3-1 ratio United uses to set rates. Per the state water code, United must charge nonagricultural customers at least three times more than agricultural users.

Ventura argued United had never proved that nonagricultural users received three times more benefit than agricultural users, as required under Proposition 218. The city argued Prop. 218, which set restrictions on when an agency or government body can increase fees, taxes and rates, superseded the water code.

Santa Barbara Superior Court Thomas Anderle considered both cases together when he issued his final decision in July 2013. He agreed United had failed to show the 3-1 benefit, and ruled that the charges were property related fees as defined under Prop. 218.

The court of appeal disagreed.

The pumping fees are "better characterized as a charge on the activity of pumping than a charge imposed by reason of property ownership," the ruling stated.

United does not supply water directly to Ventura customers. That's done through the city's water system, the decision notes.

The courts compared the pump feet of an entrance to a state or local park; citizens can enjoy the land by right, but the government can charge them to maintain the property.

In the 2011-12 fiscal year, United charged Ventura \$85.50 per acre-foot for nonagricultural uses and \$28.50 for agricultural customers. That went up to \$119.25 per acre-foot of water for nonagricultural uses and \$39.75 for agricultural customers in 2012-13.

An acre-foot is roughly 326,000 gallons of water, or enough water for a year for three average households in Ventura.

Those rates remained in 2013-14 and in 2014-15, and the city sued both years. The cases were consolidated and will be heard by Anderle. Anderle was waiting to see what the court of appeal decided, Epstein said.

Although the cases were a little bit different, "we're still evaluating what all the ramifications are," she said.

The city and United had based budgets on the assumption that United's rates would stand. Ventura had been paying the rates under protest.

United General Manager Michael Solomon said everyone at United was "very happy with the decision.

"We always believed we were doing the right thing. We never thought we belonged under Prop. 218," he said.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/18/2015



# New watering restrictions imposed amid California drought

By BETTINA BOXALL

LA Times 3/18/2015

State water board threatens to ramp up restrictions if conservation measures aren't enforced.

With California heading into another parched year, state officials Tuesday beefed up emergency drought regulations, directing urban agencies to limit the number of days residents can water their yards.

They also warned they will impose tougher restrictions in coming months if local agencies don't ramp up conservation efforts.

"We are not seeing the level of stepping up and ringing the alarm bells that the situation warrants," said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board.



Patterns are created and reflected from water receding on the bed of Folsom Lake. As the state ends the fourth-driest water year on record with no guarantee of significant rain and snow this winter, Californians face the prospect of stricter rationing and meager irrigation deliveries. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

Describing Tuesday's action as "quite modest," she said the board will discuss additional measures this spring. Those could include making emergency water restrictions permanent, requiring water districts to perform leak audits and setting targets for per capita water use.

The board initially ordered urban districts to rein in outdoor water use last summer, but enforcement has varied. Some cities only ban landscape irrigation during the heat of the day. "Some are really, really loose," Marcus said.

Tuesday's action steps up that order, requiring cities to limit watering days. The board didn't specify a number, but if the water agencies don't act within 45 days, the state will impose a two-day-a-week restriction. Cities with existing limits can maintain them, even if they permit watering on more than two days.

In Los Angeles, the new state rule "doesn't change anything," said Michelle Figueroa, spokeswoman for the city's Department of Water and Power. The city has since 2009 restricted watering to three days a week.



Given the historic low temperatures and snowfalls that pummeled the eastern U.S. this winter, it might be easy to overlook how devastating California's winter was as well. ( Jay Famiglietti )

Most other major Southern California cities have also capped watering days. But regulators don't know how many agencies statewide have done that, making it difficult to gauge the overall effect of the new directive. Nor do they know how well water districts are enforcing their conservation measures -- something it hopes to change by requiring agencies to report enforcement and compliance actions.

The new drought rules also prohibit landscape irrigation during and for 48 hours after measurable rainfall, direct restaurants to serve water only on request and instruct hotels to offer customers the option of not having their linens and towels washed daily.

The state's water situation is in some respects slightly better than it was a year ago. Precipitation in key watersheds in Northern California is 81% of normal for the date. Shasta Lake, California's largest reservoir, is 58% full, compared with 45% a year ago. Lake Oroville is half full, compared with 45% at this time last year.

Customers of the State Water Project, which delivers supplies from Northern California to Southland cities, will get 20% of their contract requests, compared with only 5% in 2014.

But some smaller reservoirs in the southern Sierra Nevada have less in reserve than they did last spring. And most troubling to water managers is the statewide snowpack. At 12% of average, it has all but disappeared. At this time last year it was 28% of average. "That snowpack is just terrifying," Marcus said Monday.

The mountain snowpack acts as a natural reservoir that in a normal year can hold much as a third of the state's water supply, slowly releasing it throughout the spring as seasonal water demand rises. This year that release will be a trickle.

"Even though the [reservoir] levels are technically higher," Marcus said, the state's water situation "is worse" as the drought drags into its fourth year.

Central Valley farmers without senior water rights are for the second year in a row likely to get no supplies from the valley's big federal irrigation project.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which imports supplies from Northern California and the Colorado River, is expected next month to consider allocating regional water deliveries, as it did during the 2007-09 drought. That will have a ripple effect throughout the Southland as local agencies react, probably by increasing water rates and adopting stronger conservation measures.

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

3/18/2015



## Over pumping of Central Valley groundwater creating a crisis, experts say



Farmer Charlie Pitigliano walks past a well head at his family farm near Pixley. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By BETTINA BOXALL

LA Times 3/18/2015

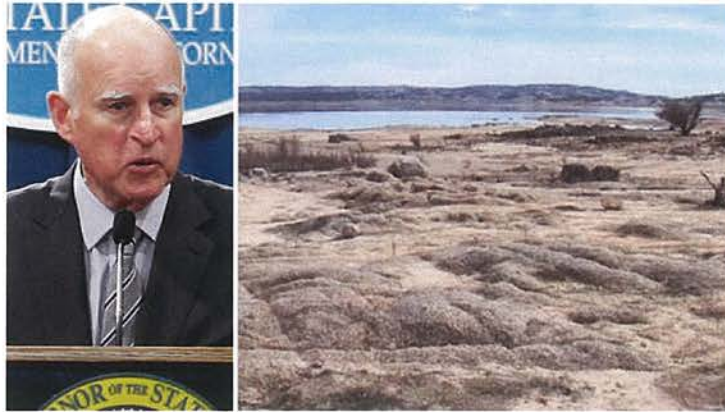
Land in the Central Valley is sinking as overuse of wells depletes groundwater  
Legislation meant to curb overuse of California groundwater won't take full effect for decades

Farmer Charlie Pitigliano has watched the local groundwater table plunge 150 feet in 15 years

A simple instrument with a weight and a pulley confirmed what hydrologist Michelle Sneed had suspected after seeing more and more dirt vanish from the base of her equipment each time she returned to her research site last summer. The tawny San Joaquin Valley earth was sinking a half-inch each month.

The reason was no mystery. "There are wells up and down this road," Sneed said, nodding toward a two-lane byway that cut across the flat agricultural landscape.

Parts of the San Joaquin Valley are deflating like a tire with a slow leak as growers pull more and more water from the ground. The land subsidence is cracking irrigation canals, buckling roads and permanently depleting storage space in the vast aquifer that underlies California's heartland.



The over pumping has escalated during the past drought-plagued decade, driving groundwater levels to historic lows in some places. But in a large swath of the valley, growers have been sucking more water from its sands and clays than nature or man puts back for going on a century.

They are eroding their buffer against future droughts and hastening the day, experts warn, when they will be forced to let more than a million acres of cropland turn to dust because they have exhausted their supplies of readily available groundwater.

“It's like a bank account. If the money you put in is less than what you're taking out, it's a deficit. How long can you withstand that?” asked supervisory hydrologist Claudia Faunt, who is Sneed's boss at the U.S. Geological Survey.

The Central Valley aquifer extends for about 400 miles under the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The subterranean water, some of which seeped into the ground 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, is California's biggest reservoir. Yet it has been largely unregulated and unmonitored. Most of the more than 100,000 wells that pierce the valley floor are unmetered and landowners have taken what they wanted.

Scientists estimate that since the first wells were drilled by settlers more than a century ago, pumping has depleted Central Valley groundwater reserves by 125 million acre-feet. That is about 4 1/2 times the capacity of Lake Mead, the biggest surface reservoir in the country. About 20 million acre-feet of that loss occurred in the last decade.

Until last year, California didn't have a statewide groundwater law, making it an outlier in the West. The legislation, intended to end unsustainable groundwater use, won't do that any time soon. Agricultural interests opposed the regulations, which call for the creation of local groundwater agencies that have more than two decades to fully comply.

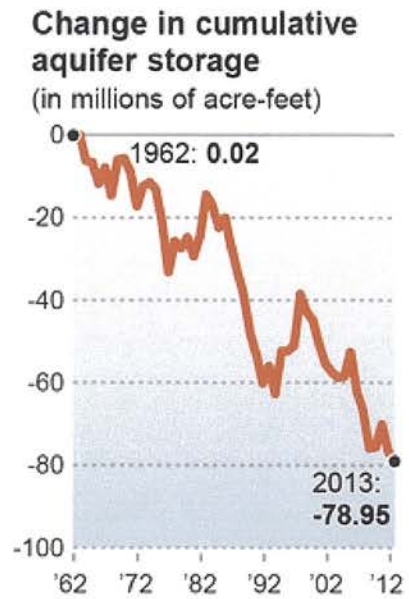


Overpumping in the Central Valley has depleted groundwater reserves by nearly 80 million acre-feet since 1962. Areas of the valley are sinking as growers pull more and more water from the ground.

- Recent subsidence
- Recent and historic



Source: CA Dept. of Water Resources, USGS



Doug Stevens / @latimesgraphics

In the meantime, it's easier for growers to keep pumping than rein in their use. "Telling people they have to stop irrigating is a huge economic thing," said Charles Burt, chairman of the Irrigation Training and Research Center at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. "Guys are going to get their guns out. If you were farming, you wouldn't take that very lightly."

When Burt compares the annual groundwater overdraft in the valley with crop water usage, he figures that 1 million to 1.5 million acres will go out of production in coming years. "There are just more straws in there than there is water," he said. "It's been going on for a long time."

The Delta-Mendota Canal lies a stone's throw from Sneed's research site. After checking a monitoring well and subsidence instrument in January, she drove her white government Jeep along the aqueduct, which carries federal irrigation deliveries south from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

She parked and walked to a point where the side of the canal had buckled, pushing two pieces of cracked concrete up into a shallow "V." Not far away was another break. Caused by uneven subsidence, the buckling creates holes in the canal bed, which slows down water movement and ultimately reduces the aqueduct's capacity.

Down the road, a small bridge over another agricultural canal has sunk so much it has to be demolished and replaced with a higher structure.



A 30-minute drive to the northeast, near El Nido, the land in the last few years has been sinking at the staggering rate of a foot a year. And the subsidence has little to do with drought.

“There are tons of young almonds and pistachios, and they have to pump,” Sneed said, referring to new nut orchards planted in areas that don't have good access to surface water. “The problem is not going away,” she added.



After getting a gold star for saving water in December, California's conservation efforts flagged in January. ( Bettina Boxall )

Sneed started studying land subsidence at Cal State Sacramento in the 1990s, and there is no place she would rather do research than the San Joaquin Valley. “This has been some of the most fun work I've ever done,” she said.

A sinking feeling is not new to the valley. By 1970 half of it — an area greater than Los Angeles and Orange counties combined — had dropped more than a foot, according to pioneering research by USGS geologist Joseph Poland.

The greatest subsidence related to groundwater extraction ever recorded in the U.S. is on the valley's west side, where the water table plunged 400 feet in the early and mid-20th century. The accompanying soil compaction caused an area southwest of Mendota to sink more than 28 feet. In a now famous 1977 photo, Poland stood by a telephone pole affixed with signs far above his head indicating where the ground had been in 1955 and 1925.

The subsidence largely stopped and groundwater levels rebounded in many areas after the arrival of federal and state irrigation deliveries, which provided growers with cheaper, better water.

But even when the water table recovers, subsided basins can't hold as much water as they did previously. Soil compaction can permanently reduce the pore space between clay particles, leaving less room for groundwater.

In the long run, Sneed said, the loss of aquifer storage space is more troubling than buckling infrastructure.

“Infrastructure can be fixed. The storage capacity cannot,” she said.

Another new area of subsidence has emerged to the south of El Nido in part of the Tulare Basin, which is the epicenter of chronic overpumping. There, “groundwater is being mined,” Faunt and other scientists wrote in a 2012 research paper.

On the edge of the new bowl, Tipton grower Charlie Pitigliano, 65, has watched the local groundwater table plunge 150 feet in the last 15 years. He blames the drop on pumping spurred by stubborn drought, a rise in the acreage of thirsty permanent crops and environmental restrictions that have diminished federal irrigation deliveries.

“I’ve been doing this for 40 years. I felt if your well is not pumping, you just drill another hole,” he said. But he knows that can’t go on forever.

Pitigliano’s maternal grandfather was an Italian immigrant who bought farmland in the area in the 1920s. He mostly irrigated his crops with well water until the 1950s, when the federal Friant-Kern Canal came through with its bounty of San Joaquin River supplies.

Pitigliano started growing alfalfa, wheat and corn on some of that land in the 1970s, using groundwater and federal supplies. But he struggled financially, only surviving because he managed other people’s farmland. “You need to grow some almonds,” an uncle advised him.



After getting a gold star for saving water in December, California's conservation efforts flagged in January. ( Bettina Boxall )

He planted his first trees in 1988. Today, the roughly 1,500 acres that Pitigliano and his three sons own are lined with almond and pistachio trees, as is about half the acreage they manage for other landowners. Their clients used to be mostly neighbors. Now they are doctors and hedge funds.



Buoyed by global demand, almonds have become one of California's most lucrative crops, worth more than \$4.5 billion in 2012, according to the most recent U.S. Department of Agriculture figures.

But the nut boom sweeping the San Joaquin Valley is driving up water demand during droughts. Not only are almond trees thirstier than many annual row crops, they can't be fallowed when water supplies are tight.

Pitigliano spent \$1.5 million in the last two years drilling six new wells, some of which reach 1,000 feet beneath the valley floor, more than twice as deep as his old wells. The groundwater is carrying his family operation through one of the worst droughts in the state record. But it is alkaline and contains more crop-damaging mineral salts than supplies from his old wells. So he had to install a \$50,000 treatment system.

"The cheap water is gone," Pitigliano said as he sat in his farm office on a day when the valley fog draped his dormant orchards in a ghostly gray. The greeting on his office door proclaims, "Growing peace of mind since 1975," but Pitigliano says if it weren't for his children, he'd stake a "For Sale" sign in front of his property.

It is the economics of having to go deeper and deeper for groundwater that will ultimately force growers to retire land. It's not that the Central Valley's thick aquifer will run dry. Scientists estimate that it holds roughly 800 million acre-feet of water that seeped deep into the valley's sands and clays over millenniums from streams and rivers swollen with runoff from the neighboring Sierra Nevada and coastal ranges.

Farmers will instead run out of water they can afford to pump. As the groundwater table drops ever lower, wells become prohibitively expensive to drill, water quality deteriorates and it takes more energy, and thus money, to pull supplies from depths of 2,000 feet or more.

Growers know the pumping levels aren't sustainable, said Jim Sullins, the UC Cooperative Extension director in Tulare and Kings counties.

Many agree that something needs to be done, but they view the new state regulations with dread. "We're getting to the point now, it's going to be winners and losers," he added.

Pitigliano is on a steering committee that could wind up deciding which water users lose in his corner of the valley.

The group will develop a plan to locally implement the state's new groundwater law — most likely by a combination of recharging the aquifer and imposing limits on withdrawals.

If locals don't, the state will eventually step in. And that is something most farmers desperately want to avoid.



“To save our valley, we have to police ourselves,” Pitigliano said, acknowledging that it won't be easy.

“Who is going to say, ‘Turn your pump off?’ ”

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

3/18/2015

Readers React

## California's wimpy water restrictions aren't enough



Cracked concrete on the Delta Mendota Canal near Los Banos indicates that the ground is sinking, maybe irreversibly, due to over pumping groundwater in the San Joaquin Valley. (Los Angeles Times)

**To the editor:** The State Water Resources Control Board wimped out. Instead of the half-measures it approved Tuesday, directing local agencies to limit outdoor watering, we need immediate, draconian water rationing to preserve what little water is left in California. (["New watering restrictions imposed amid California drought," March 17](#))

We also need immediate plans for what will be done if the snowpack does not return next season. Praying for rain is not planning. We need to begin building desalination plants up and down the entire coast and put a disaster plan in place in case the reservoirs run dry.

Eliminate all rice farming and other water-intensive crops. Eliminate fracking, which is a huge waste of water. Turn off all the landscape sprinklers, especially for lawns and golf courses. Restrict water for pools and fountains this year.

Running out of water will bring disaster and dire consequences. The state should order large-scale mandatory cutbacks now.

*Jill Reiss, Calabasas*

..

**To the editor:** Saving water is not difficult. The problem is making people aware that the drought is a real problem. The solution is simply to increase the charge rate — perhaps double it until usage is reduced.

It's also time that we get rid of all green landscaping in public spaces. I'm constantly impressed when we visit our daughter in Phoenix, where public street banks and many yards are covered with gravel, not grass. They know how to save water.

*Dick Ettington, Palos Verdes Peninsula*

..

**To the editor:** California's new water restrictions are pretty wimpy.

Living in northern Australia, we haven't watered our lawn in 20 years. Sure, we get a rainy season, but the grass grows brown in the dry weather.

I recommend that Californians mow their lawns no more than once a year. This means grass grows to its proper seed producing state, protecting lower areas from drying out by sacrificing the upper layer. This creates a dry canopy that shields the soil and lower grass from sunlight.

Watering of lawns should be reduced to twice a week between the hours of 8 p.m. and midnight, and it should be done by hand, not sprinkler. Farms should be required to have drip irrigation.

*Sean Meaney, Darwin, Australia*

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

3/18/2015



## DROUGHT

### Water-wasters not fined, so far

*Agencies balk at trying enforcement*

Ventura County Star 3/15/2015

SACRAMENTO — California water regulators, alarmed by slack conservation three years into a crippling drought, took the unprecedented step last summer of establishing statewide restrictions and gave communities a hammer to enforce them: a \$500 fine for excessive watering of lawns, hosing down driveways and running decorative yard fountains with drinking water.

The drought persists, but most local water departments have been reluctant to crack down on water-wasters. Warning letters are unusual. Small fines are rare. And the \$500 hammer is virtually never wielded.

Still, the State Water Resources Control Board is voting Tuesday on adding more restrictions even while acknowledging it's not sure how — or whether — Californians are following existing rules.

Recognizing that hole in data collection, the board plans to start tracking how cities ensure compliance with water regulations.

With no statewide data available, The Associated Press queried more than a dozen communities around the state and found wide disparities in enforcement.

In the Southern California desert city of Coachella, not a single home with an emerald lawn has received a warning letter. Los Angeles sent more than 5,000 warning letters but issued only a pair of \$200 fines last year for a service area of 4 million people. Meanwhile, the communities of San Ramon and Dublin east of San Francisco imposed nearly \$40,000 in fines after losing access to a key source of water.

"We are not seeing the level of enforcement we need to," said Heather Cooley, director of the water program at the nonprofit environmental group Pacific Institute in Oakland. "Without it, you aren't getting the same amount of water savings."

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency in January 2014 and called on residents to reduce water consumption by 20 percent. The state has hit that number during only one month — December. The reduction slipped to 9 percent the next month, below the 11 percent monthly average since July.

Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state water board, said the agency plans to track enforcement to see if it leads to conservation. She said agencies don't need to issue fines if they're making a concerted effort to teach residents about the drought.

"It's not all about spanking people; it's also about being in relationships with them," Marcus said.

Still, she acknowledged that she hears frequent complaints about the lack of aggressive rules enforcement. The board is planning to set up a water waste hotline for residents who believe their tips have been brushed off by local departments. The board also plans to send warning letters to offenders and the agencies serving them.

Representatives of water agencies say fines can be counterproductive to educating customers about conservation. Since Summer, Santa Maria residents used 34 gallons a day more than other Central Coast residents, but the city has only responded to 20 calls about water wasting and hasn't issued any penalties.

"That \$500 fine isn't going to bring the water back. Changing behavior is what's going to save water in the future," said Shad Springer, the city's director of utilities.

Farther up the coast, Santa Cruz is finding that hitting customers' wallets can help change behavior.

Monthly water use plunged as much as 30 percent last year while the city was issuing more than \$1.6 million in penalties, half of which were waived for residents who attended "water school" and fixed leaks. But state calculations show water savings slipping to 7 percent in January after rains replenished a reservoir and ended the need for mandatory restrictions and penalties.

Coachella Valley Water District Conservation Manager Dave Koller said his staff members have to go to great lengths to track down the wealthy out-of state residents who keep vacation homes with water guzzling landscapes. He said gated communities are harder to patrol and enter to respond to waste reports.

Some agencies have criticized the board for taking a blanket approach to conservation. The Beaumont-Cherry Valley district in rural Riverside County imposed restrictions under state mandate, but General Manager Eric Fraser said an aggressive pursuit of water-wasters doesn't make sense for an agency that has enough water in local storage to supply customers for four years.

"You don't want to end up with a blighted community as a result of trying to implement drastic water conservation measures," Fraser said.

The board is continuing to expand conservation measures and is considering making the rules permanent. Under the proposal they are expected to approve Tuesday, residents can't water their lawns until two days after rainfall and restaurants can't provide glasses of water unless customers ask.



Steve Upton (right), an inspector for the water conservation unit of the Sacramento Utilities Department, follows up on tips concerning city residents wasting water in one of California's driest years on record.  
ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

We are not seeing the level of enforcement we need to. Without it, you aren't getting the same amount of water savings."

**Heather Cooley**, *director of the water program at the nonprofit environmental group Pacific Institute in Oakland*

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/15/2015



## *A water project worth its salt?*

*City turns to desalination in last-ditch effort*

Ventura County Star 3/15/2015

SANTA BARBARA — California's four-year drought created the statewide mantra: "Conserve, conserve, conserve." But this coastal city soon can add another word to its water-related lexicon: desalinate.

Santa Barbara owns a mothballed plant — built more than 20 years ago during another severe drought — that can turn seawater into drinking water. But it was never used beyond a tryout phase before steady rain began falling again. Now, officials are working to press the Charles E. Meyer Desalination Facility back into service as the city's reservoirs continue to diminish.

The city plans to spend up to \$40 million to modernize and reactivate the plant, which was closed in 1992 when the last drought ended. It is among a number of desalting projects being considered along the California coast, including in Huntington Beach and the Monterey Peninsula.

In Cambria, a hybrid desalination plant that began operating in November treats brackish water to make it drinkable. And the nation's largest desalination plant is being built in Carlsbad for \$954million.

Although it may seem natural to think the Pacific Ocean could be the answer to California's water crisis, experts say a stampede toward desalination is unlikely.

"It has two big disadvantages: It's really expensive and it's energy-intensive," said Henry Vaux Jr., a University of California, Berkeley professor emeritus of resource economics who contributed to a 2008 National Research Council report on desalination.

It also could put elected leaders in the unenviable position of sticking customers with expensive desalination bills should stormy weather return.

"Given the time it takes to come up with a plant, including permitting and construction, the drought will probably be over by the time it's built," said Heather Cooley, water program director of the Pacific Institute, a nonprofit that conducts research on natural resources.

That's what happened in Santa Barbara in the early 1990s, when officials began constructing the \$35 million plant. At that time, communities were so desperate for water, Ventura even floated the notion of towing icebergs down the coast from Alaska to provide some relief. State experts said the idea had been studied and quickly discarded.

Heavy rains came before Santa Barbara's desalination plant was finished nine months later, and it was never used beyond the test phase. But the city kept up its maintenance schedule over the last two decades, with the idea that it could be brought online again in another drought.

That time arrived last September when the city's main reservoir, Lake Cachuma, fell to less than 30 percent capacity and the city tightened restrictions on customers' water use

to encourage conservation. The City Council voted unanimously that month to pursue reopening the plant in the fall of 2016.

“The council policy was to go to desalination as an absolutely last resort, and this is a last resort,” Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider said in an interview. “The exceptional drought has accelerated this year, and we need to be ready and have desal online when we need it.”

If the plant is reactivated next year, it would produce enough water to make up about 30 percent of Santa Barbara’s demand, said Joshua Haggmark, the interim water resources manager.

Santa Barbara already reduced its water usage by 24 percent in January, compared with the same month in a normal year, Haggmark said. If current conditions persist, the city will probably ramp up its water restrictions to the next level, including a possible moratorium on watering lawns, he said.

“People have really stepped up to the plate,” Haggmark said, adding that strong conservation numbers do not lessen the necessity for desalination. “This is not a knee-jerk response.”

Desalinated water will cost about a third more than Santa Barbara’s imported water because on top of the estimated \$40 million it could take to open the plant, it could cost \$5.2 million a year to keep it running.

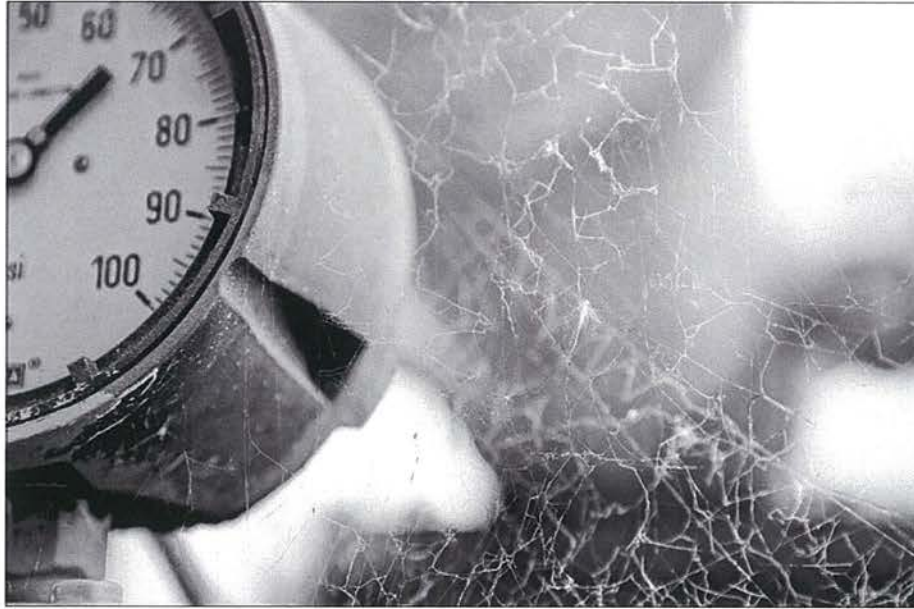
That means water users could see a significant increase in their water bills this summer if the city moves forward. Monthly bills could increase from \$78 to \$108 for an average household using 1,200 cubic feet. A cubic foot equals about 7.5 gallons.

The Santa Barbara plant will produce fresh water through reverse osmosis, an energy-intensive process that separates salts and contaminants from seawater by forcing it through sand filters and tightly coiled synthetic membranes. The salt is returned to the ocean as brine.

But environmentalists complain that the Santa Barbara plant will damage the marine environment by sucking microorganisms, fish eggs and plankton, which form a critical part of the food chain, into water intake pipes in the open ocean.

They would rather see intake pipes placed under the ocean floor, which they said would be less harmful to aquatic life.

The city has agreed to study alternative methods for taking in ocean water, but it is not required under various state permits to change anything.



Spider webs gather on a pressure gauge at Santa Barbara's Charles e. Meyer desalination Plant, which has been in standby mode for more than 20 years. Brian van der Brug/Los Angeles Times/Tns

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/15/2015



## Southern part of state eyes North's water

*Rice farmers are receiving major offers*

SACRAMENTO — The drought has water agencies in Southern California offering big prices for water belonging to Northern California rice farmers.

California's giant Metropolitan Water District and other Southern California agencies are offering to buy up to \$71 million in water from Sacramento Valley farmers, The Sacramento Bee reported Saturday. That's for enough water to supply between 100,000 and 200,000 households for a year.

The Metropolitan agency serves 19 million people in Los Angeles and beyond.

Four years of some of the steepest droughts on record have made water increasingly scarce in California, and have led state and federal water projects to limit water deliveries to arid Southern California again this year.

The Metropolitan and Kern County water agencies and other water districts are now offering farmers around Northern California's Feather River more for their water than farmers would earn if they used the water to grow crops. At \$700 an acre-foot of water, Sacramento Valley water holders are being offered about 40 percent more for their water this summer than last summer.

"That reflects the desperation and the competition from the people down there," Ted Trimble, general manager of the Western Canal Water District in Richvale, Butte County, one of the participating sellers, told The Sacramento Bee. Many of the farmers involved are rice farmers. Jim Morris, spokesman for the California Rice Commission, said the commission wasn't familiar with the tentative sale and couldn't comment on its effect on this year's crop. "We're still looking at what the upcoming season will hold," Morris said.

California's rice farmers already cut planting by one-fourth in 2014 because of the drought. Trimble says his district won't idle more than one-sixth of its acres this year to take the water deal, because that would undercut the long term health of California's rice industry.

California's rice fields do more than just grow rice; the Nature Conservancy says the rice fields provided more than 13,000 acres of critical wetland for migratory wildfowl this winter through a project with state rice farmers.

---

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015  
Powered by TECNAVIA

3/15/2015

Letters

## Water and drought

Pat Browne, Camarillo

Re: your Feb. 22 editorial, "More flexibility helps people in severe drought": While I appreciate The Star's aesthetics for keeping a 200-year culture for green lawns alive with the suggestion of fake lawns, we would be better served to return to the more ancient systems for cisterns, dikes and aquifers to retain our water.

Your comment perpetuates a culture that is past its time and was based on aristocratic use of land over the other 99 percent of people's needs, let alone the environment.

Studies say that even in an average year in the desert, if all the water is collected, we would have 50 percent to 75 percent of what we currently use. I know that over 4,000 acre feet of water falls on my own town in Ventura County in an average year of 10 to 12 inches. However, our culture and design allow for close to 80 percent to 95 percent of that water to run to the ocean as stormwater or polluted waste.

If water currently costs \$1,800 an acre-foot to buy wholesale from the Delta or Colorado and if each town is currently paying \$1 million to \$3 million a year to have a stormwater permit from the feds, you are talking an average of \$10 million potential savings for each of the major cities in our county.

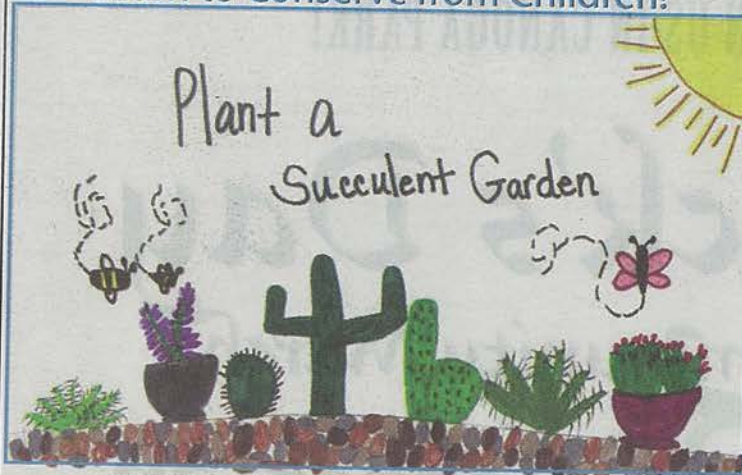
My spouse and I are just finishing our gray-water distribution system. It works fine, and we expect real fruits of our labor next year in the form of happy plants.

Putting a fake plastic copy as a status symbol does not impress me. We will be putting our plastic into 1,500-gallon tanks for a gradual recharge of this natural gift back to the rest of nature. Denial of this concept only delays our responsibility to our neighbors and family.

Copyright © 2015 Ventura County Star 2015

3/14/15

Learn to Conserve from Children!



2011 Water Awareness Poster Contest Finalist  
Anna Keogh, 1st Grade, Mrs. Juarez, Round Meadow Elementary

[www.LVMWD.com](http://www.LVMWD.com)





**Free LVMWD Garden Class**  
**"Watershed Friendly Gardening Basics"**  
Thursday, April 2, 6:00 - 8:30 pm

Learn how to break your garden's "chemical addiction," build soil and plant health with compost and compost tea, enhance your soil's ability to capture and hold rainwater, cut your water consumption with native plants and high efficiency irrigation equipment and positively impact the Malibu Creek Watershed.



Join landscape designer Paula Henson of the Green Gardens Group for an informative and entertaining lesson in the basics of sustainable, watershed-friendly gardening.

*How to Register*

Register online at [www.LVMWD.com](http://www.LVMWD.com) / For Customers / Conservation / Garden Classes.

Due to the high demand for these classes, preference is given to LVMWD customers; **walk-ins will not be admitted.**

Problems registering online? Call 818-251-2100 during business hours.

A complimentary light meal will be provided at each class.



[www.LVMWD.com](http://www.LVMWD.com)



[http://www.lvmwd.com/  
for-customers/conservation/garden-classes](http://www.lvmwd.com/for-customers/conservation/garden-classes)