

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

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Oxnard wastewater plant set for \$74.2M in upgrades

WENDY LEUNG

Ventura County Star 10/28/2016



Portions of Oxnard's wastewater treatment plant were built in 1955.

Oxnard's streets and infrastructure have seen better days. And in the case of the city's wastewater treatment plant, it's literally crumbling.

The Oxnard City Council received pavement and sewage plant updates Tuesday, and the list of challenges is long. About 40 percent of the wastewater treatment plant, which has some treatment components built in the 1950s, is deemed to be in poor or very poor condition.

Updates by the staff are typically routine items on a City Council agenda, but with Tuesday's meeting being the next-to-last one before Election Day, comments got heated.

On Nov. 8, Oxnard voters will weigh in on Measure M, an initiative spearheaded by council candidate Aaron Starr. The measure aims to repeal wastewater rate increases approved earlier this year. A portion of the rate hike goes toward capital improvements at the plant.

Three candidates for the council — Daniel Chavez, Steve Huber and Jack Villa — spoke out against Measure M during the public comment period of Tuesday's meeting and held up signs that read "No on Measure M, keep our water safe."

Measure M proponent Alicia Percell and Starr urged the city to postpone the sewage plant update until after the election, saying the presentation was slanted toward the city and against Measure M.

City Attorney Stephen Fischer said the council could discuss the item and advised them to stay factual and "dispassionate."

The city in January approved a series of wastewater rate increases through 2020. The first hike was on residents' bills in March, representing a 35 percent increase. By 2020, if the rate schedule continues, ratepayers will see an 87 percent increase.

City Manager Greg Nyhoff said the listed annual increase is the most the city can raise. It doesn't necessarily mean the city will raise it to that amount. Nyhoff said the council can consider the rates every year.

"It's not an automatic increase," Nyhoff said.

With the added revenue, the city plans to spend \$74.2 million in the next five years on infrastructure improvements at the sewage plant. Wastewater Division Manger Thien Ng called these "stopgap measures."

For example, a treatment unit known as a clarifier will be partially repaired because the metal structure has eroded, Ng said. But the cracked concrete structure that surrounds the clarifier will have to be repaired at a later date when more funding is available.

The council also received an update on the street-paving schedule. In the past 14 years, the city has spent \$118 million on street repairs. Despite the effort, the condition of the city's streets is still subpar compared to surrounding communities.

An index used in the industry to rate pavement condition gives the city's streets a score of 57 out of 100. Comparatively, Ventura has a score of 71 and the state average is 66. Typically, scores between 50 and 70 show the pavement condition to be at risk.

According to a 10-year projection, pavement condition will continue to degrade to a score of 44 if the city continues to spend \$4 million a year, as it plans to in the current budget. However, if a countywide transportation tax is passed, thereby allocating more money for local streets, a score of 55 could be maintained in the next 10 years.

Expected rain arrives in county, with more ahead

CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ & JOHN SCHEIBE
Ventura County Star 10/28/2016



A storm system arrives at Surfers Point in Ventura on Thursday.

KAREN QUINCY LOBERG/THE STAR

Much-needed rain started to move into Ventura County on Thursday, bringing the first drops of what is expected to be a series of storms over the coming four days, the National Weather Service said.

'The rain is starting to creep in,' Stuart Seto, a weather specialist with the agency in Oxnard, said Thursday afternoon.

Forecasters were expecting anywhere from three-quarters of an inch to an inch or more rain over the next 24 hours, Seto said. Thunderstorms also could be on the way, Seto said. If they come, the rain 'will fall heavier and faster,' Seto said, noting that any thunderstorms most likely would arrive sometime Friday.

A flash-flood warning was in effect late Thursday into Friday morning for areas of the county where vegetation has been destroyed by fire.

More rain could be on the way Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Seto said, from the series of storms that will make their way through California before heading east. If forecasters are right, October might turn out to be a normal month as far as rainfall, he said.

As of Thursday, rainfall across Southern California was only 67 percent of what it should be this rainy season, the National Weather Service said.

Scott Sukup, a meteorologist with the agency, said the heaviest part of the first storm would likely arrive late Thursday or early Friday, 'though there may be some showers that precede it.'

'The bulk of rain will be over by noon Friday,' Sukup said. After Friday, chances of rain will be lower, around 20 percent for Saturday.

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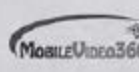
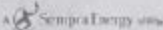
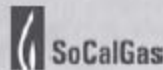
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Private water wells facing curbs in Ojai

CLAUDIA BOYD-BARRETT SPECIAL TO THE STAR
Ventura County Star 10/27/2016

Amid growing concern about the future of the water supply, the Ojai City Council has approved an indefinite ban on permits for new private water wells or expansions to existing wells.

The council passed two moratoriums banning the permits — one as emergency legislation, the other a standard ordinance — in a 5-0 vote during its regular meeting Tuesday. The ordinances replace a moratorium passed in October 2014 that expires this week.

The council enacted the emergency ordinance so it would take effect immediately, before the previous moratorium expires. The regular ordinance is the same as the emergency ordinance, and the city staff recommended the council pass it in case the city has difficulty later upholding its reasoning for passing the moratorium as an emergency.

Unlike the 2014 moratorium, which expired after two years by law, the new ban on permits will remain in place until the council decides to revoke it. The council enacted the previous moratorium to allow time for the Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency to create a sustainability plan in response to a state mandate. That plan is expected to be completed in January, city officials said Tuesday.

This time, the council enacted the moratorium under its own police power, citing a need to protect the health and safety of the public by conserving the Ojai Valley's limited water resources. Ojai's two water sources — Lake Casitas and the groundwater basin — are both well below 50 percent capacity.

"We continue to be in severe drought," City Manager Steve McClary said. "We've been under the governor's proclamation of a state of emergency since Jan. 17, 2014, and as we know, the last winter did not bring any relief to Southern California, including our region."

The moratorium prohibits the city from issuing permits to construct new water wells or to modify or repair existing water wells if those changes would increase the well's capacity to draw water. People seeking permits for backup or standby wells that would not initiate new or increased use of groundwater would be exempt. Permit applicants also can apply for council approval of a waiver to the moratorium based on special circumstances or hardship.

The council agreed the moratorium should only be lifted when the council decides it's the right time, not just when the groundwater sustainability plan is complete. Councilwoman Betsy Clapp argued that it should not be lifted until the region is no longer in a drought.

"A plan does not mean there's water," Clapp pointed out.

In other business, the council voted down a proposal to adopt another emergency moratorium that would have imposed a 45-day ban on permits for new commercial developments or expansions to existing ones that increase the draw on the water supply by more than 10 percent.

Clapp and Mayor Paul Blatz voted in favor of the proposal, arguing that it would ensure no big commercial developments come to town before the council has a chance to adopt new water-wise building standards.

Council members Randy Haney, Bill Weirick and Severo Lara voted against the moratorium. Lara said he didn't think the ordinance would have much impact because the city sees very few significant commercial developments or expansions. Weirick said that even if a big project did come forward, it would take months to review, and by that time, water-wise standards would be in place.

Northern California is seeing two or three times more rain than normal. So why is Southern California so dry?

[Joseph Serna](#)

LA Times 10/27/2016

As the state enters its sixth year of drought, Northern California is seeing some significant relief thanks to a series of powerful storms, while Southern California remains mired in record dry conditions.

Despite a rainstorm set to hit the Southland this week, the region continues to face an unprecedented lack of precipitation, recording only 60% of average rainfall this month. By contrast, communities from the Bay Area north to the Oregon border have recorded 200% to 300% of the average this month, according to the [National Weather Service](#).

It's a pattern Californians saw last winter, when the much-hyped El Niño phenomenon was expected to soak Southern California but instead steered north, blanketing the northern Sierra Nevada in snow and leaving Angelenos and their neighbors in the dust.

"We can only hope as the winter progresses we'll get the rains to go farther south," said Reginald Kennedy, a National Weather Service hydrologist. "Nothing in the climate forecast wants to tip its hat."

Rain and snow in Northern California are considered essential to easing [the drought](#) because the state's major networks of dams and reservoirs are located there, providing water to many other parts of the state. While rain in Southern California is also important, much of it flows into storm drains and into the ocean.

Since Oct. 1, the start of the water year — which forecasters use to measure annual precipitation — cities and mountain communities from the Bay Area to the Oregon border have been drenched by an atmospheric river of tropical storms. It's rained more than 18 inches this month in Gasquet, a rural community in Del Norte County, and 12 inches in Crescent City, Kennedy said.

The rainfall was enough that the U.S. Drought Monitor considered the northwest corner of California, or about 7% of the state, to be in normal condition instead of "abnormally dry" or worse. That much of California has not been considered normal since March 2013.

The Drought Monitor, however, warned that much more rain and snow will be needed in the winter "to undo the far-reaching impacts of the ongoing ...drought."

“It’s a nice start. We’re pleased to see that some of the reservoirs are holding their own in the northern half of the state,” added Doug Carlson, a spokesman with the state Department of Water Resources. “But if you get to the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, they’re only at 7%.”

More rain would help California’s water supply issues. Over the last two years, Californians significantly reduced water consumption by ripping out lawns, buying water-efficient appliances and taking shorter showers, among other things. But in recent months, water conservation efforts have slipped as the state eased water restrictions.

Statewide, people in cities and towns cut their water use by just 17.7% in August compared with the same month in 2013. In August 2015, Californians reduced their consumption by 27%, beating the target of a 25% reduction set by Gov. [Jerry Brown](#).

More storms are forecast for the northern half of the state with only hours-long breaks in between through the beginning of November, Kennedy said.

Government agencies that rely on the summer snowmelt and this season’s rains for their water could get up to 60% of what they’re requesting, a huge leap from the 5% that was projected at this time last year, Carlson said.

“That’s good, but I think we have to be conservative that our long-term forecast is very, very shaky,” he said. “Last year the El Niño story was flipped on its head from what was expected. A lot of rain was expected in the south but you didn’t get it.”

As a result of the recent storms, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection began shrinking its firefighting force in the north, an agency spokesman said Monday.

Crews remained on full alert in Southern California, however, as high temperatures, strong winds and low humidity kept the San Gabriel Mountains under red-flag conditions for much of last week. Southland brush fires are often driven by hot Santa Ana winds, which usually continue into November and December.

Though a relatively significant storm is expected across Southern California through Friday, the impact on the overall drought picture will be negligible, experts said.

A quarter to three-quarters of an inch of rain is expected to fall across Los Angeles and Ventura counties, said National Weather Service meteorologist Dave Bruno. Up to an inch is predicted in the Los Angeles County mountains and possibly as much as 2 inches in Ventura County mountains.

“We are still uncertain as to how much rain is going to fall across Los Angeles County in particular,” Bruno said. “We do think there’s a potential for moderate to heavy rain — certainly a pretty good storm for October.”

If there is heavy, intense rain, there is a chance for a flash-flood watch for burn areas, Bruno said.

“That’s going to be the main thing we’re concerned about with this system,” Bruno said. “If that really heavy rain gets into L.A. County, that could be an issue. We’re definitely going to watch that closely.”

Public safety briefs

Ventura County Star 10/26/2016

Hueneme Road closed after break

OXNARD - A water main break closed a stretch of Hueneme Road on Tuesday afternoon in Oxnard, city officials said. The line broke about 1:10 p.m., leading to the closure of eastbound and westbound lanes of Hueneme Road between Olds and Casper roads, the city said. Crews with the Oxnard Public Works Department were repairing the break, but officials said the repairs and road closure could stretch into the night. The California Highway Patrol was expected to remain in the area providing traffic control, the city said.

Sewage plant is focus of meeting

WENDY LEUNG

Ventura County Star 10/25/2016

It's hard to discuss the state of Oxnard's finances without also discussing its wastewater treatment plant. That will be part of the focus at two meetings this week. At its regular meeting on Tuesday, the council will get an update on improvements planned for the wastewater treatment plant on South Perkins Road, an aging facility in need of rehabilitation. On Thursday, ramifications of a wastewater rate increase repeal will be among the fiscal topics discussed during a special meeting. In March, increases to residents' sewer rates went into effect as part of a series of hikes approved by the council. The initial rate hike was 35 percent with increases planned every year for the next four years. Rates in 2020 will be 87 percent higher compared to rates at the start of 2016 under the approved plan. But a repeal of those rate hikes known as Measure M will be before voters on Nov. 8. The city's predicament should the ballot initiative pass was discussed last week by the fiscal policy task force, which consists of council members Bryan MacDonald and Bert Perello. The task force learned that the city's wastewater fund reserves, at about \$2 million earlier this year, will be depleted by February should Measure M pass.

Other fiscal matters are expected to be discussed Thursday including a 10-year forecast, which was cited when the council approved pay increases for its public safety employees. A financial outlook upgrade given to the city's general fund by Standard & Poor's will also be discussed.

On Tuesday, public works staff will update the council on a five-year plan to fix the most crucial aspects of the wastewater facility. Portions of the treatment plant were built as early as 1955. In a study conducted last year, 80 percent of the facility was deemed to be in fair, poor or very poor conditions. Infrastructure failures have led to sewer spills three times so far this year, according to wastewater division manager Thien Ng. Those three spills were contained but a separate infrastructure failure led to a spill of partially treated water out into the ocean. The Tuesday council meeting begins 6 p.m. and the Thursday special meeting begins 5 p.m. Both meetings will take place at the Council Chambers, 305 W. Third St.

In this California congressional district, water is more important than Donald Trump



Rep. David Valadao looks at who his high school-aged campaign interns have called. Valadao faces attorney Emilio Huerta in November. (Sarah D. Wire / Los Angeles Times)

Sarah D. Wire
LA Times 10/24/2016

The signs vie for space with political campaign placards at intersections along State Route 43 as a constant reminder to Central Valley residents. “No water, no jobs.”

Trees along the roadside are yellowed and shrunken. In the distance a tractor creates a cloud of dust as it makes its way across a field.

“Water=Jobs,” reads one billboard. “Tell [Feinstein](#) to pass [the] water bill,” reads another.

The region’s congressman is among the most vulnerable incumbents in California. But unlike other parts of the state, where [Republicans](#) are suffering thanks to [Donald Trump](#)’s place at the top of the ticket on Nov. 8, Rep. [David Valadao](#) renounced Trump early and has been able to keep his reelection campaign local.

In California’s Central Valley, the nation’s most productive agricultural region, the drought drives everything. And the ongoing fight over how much water flows could be the reason [Democrats](#) haven’t been able to win in the 21st Congressional District with a national race.

On paper, Valadao's seat looks like an easy play for Democrats trying to win back control of the House: 47% of registered voters are Democrats, 30% are Republican. Latinos make up nearly 75% of the population and 57% of registered voters in the district, one of California's largest, stretching from which covers a vast stretch of the Central Valley from Bakersfield north into Kettleman City and Wood Ranch.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has tried for years to flip the 21st, but Republicans have held it since it was created in 2012. (Before redistricting, Democratic Rep. [Jim Costa](#) represented much of the area.)

As Valadao was first elected in 2012 with 57.8% of the vote over a Latino businessman, President Obama topped Mitt Romney here 55% to 44%. In 2008, with different district boundaries, Obama won with 51.5%.

This time around, Democrats see hope in attorney Emilio Huerta, the son of labor and civil rights icon Dolores Huerta. But Valadao is still, at this point, favored to win.

"No matter what I do, what event I do, if it's a tele-town hall, if it's a door-knock, doesn't matter where I'm at, water is the first thing you hear about," Valadao said in an interview from his campaign office here. "A basic thing like water shouldn't be the No. 1 issue, but because of the situation that we face here it obviously is."

California's often scarce water supply has pitted a wide array of powerful forces —big cities, the agriculture industry and conservationists — against one another. Nowhere in the state is that quite as visible as in the Central Valley.

In Terra Bella and Porterville, fresh drinking water is brought in by trucks, and residents use community showers. Hardwick and other towns were out of water for a while, and [water flowed from taps in East Porterville this August for the first time in three years.](#)

Decades of state and national brawls over California water policy, and the feeling that the Central Valley has lost those fights as the drought continued, have led many local voters to one conclusion: blame Democrats, said Keith Smith, associate professor of political science at University of the Pacific.

"So many people's work is tied to farming. They feel the water issue. The view is we're just not allocating it where it ought to be allocated," Smith said. If that's what you see and hear from employers and neighbors, "you might begin to identify the Democratic Party as the problem."



Rep. David Valadao (R-Hanford) speaks with high school interns at his Hanford campaign office. (Sarah D. Wire / Los Angeles Times)

That's how Valadao presents it, at least.

As he campaigns for a third term, the congressman stresses how much he has staked on the water battle. In Washington, he gets GOP leaders to add his water plan for increasing flows and storage of water as an amendment to other legislation. His bill has been attached to must-pass bills like spending authorizations — a move that infuriates many of the delegation's Delta-area Democrats and prompted a veto threat from the president.

His legislation focuses on funneling more water to San Joaquin Valley growers by reducing the amount used to support endangered fish populations. Democrats and environmental groups say it overrides federal legal protections for salmon, migratory birds and other fish and wildlife.

Valadao's bill has repeatedly passed the House and sits in multiple forms in the Senate. But California's Democratic senators, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, find the measure unacceptable, and Senate Republicans, who control the chamber, haven't rushed to pick it up either. Feinstein has proposed her own water bill that [would provide a holistic water plan for the state](#). Several House Democrats have proposed plans as well.

"We're getting to the point where we're almost there," Valadao said during a KSEE 24 debate Thursday.

There hasn't been talk of any agreement on Valadao's bill — at least publicly. If it doesn't pass in the weeks after the election, Valadao would have to start from scratch in the new year, potentially with a Democratic Senate and a slimmer House majority.

Huerta countered that the Central Valley can't wait on [a water bill that Democrats aren't willing to pass](#). He said a Democratic representative would have an easier time reaching

a compromise, especially given the current 39-14 domination the party has in California's delegation.

Sitting in his Bakersfield campaign office, Huerta said he doesn't have a plan for addressing the area's water needs, yet. If elected, he'd wait to craft water legislation with other House members.

"The ability to reach across the table and get bipartisan support for real water legislation is required, and that hasn't taken place here," Huerta said. "Having any congressional representative who is willing to work on a bipartisan basis will be more successful than one who doesn't even take into consideration the impact that a water delivery system may have on other stakeholders."

That idea may not be enough to sway a district that's consistently sent Republicans to Congress.

Only eight U.S. congressional districts have a higher Latino population than the 21st. With demographic trends giving Democrats a boost, the national party has always eyed the district and spent time and attention here.

Local activists identified that as part of the problem. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee picks a candidate with little feedback from those who live here and runs a generic Democratic campaign crafted from Washington.

"The challengers until now have not been running a Valley race," said Democratic Party activist Victor Moheno. And a "Valley" race involves a significant ground game and a focus on local issues — like water — that cut "across party lines."

Some hoped Huerta's well-known name, and decades working in the district helping open banks and building senior and low-income housing, would bridge the gap this year. Moheno isn't sure it will be enough to counter Valadao's strengths as a dairy farmer with roots in the agricultural community.

Valadao has outspent Huerta throughout the race and had \$1.3 million in the bank as of Sept. 30, nearly double what Huerta had left headed into the campaign's final five weeks.

The family name may help Huerta with farmworkers, but it won't get him anywhere with landowners who need water to stay afloat and don't think fondly of his mother's work organizing farmworkers, Moheno said.

"She is roundly hated by the farmers," Moheno said. "They are writing big checks to Valadao."

Either way, Democrats are hoping Huerta rides a national anti-Trump, high-turnout tide on Nov. 8. If Valadao survives what could be a devastating night for Republican politicians across the country, he knows he'll face other fights down the line.

“Look at the numbers in the district — it's always going to be a tough race for a Republican.”

River revival moving forward

Goal of restoring salmon in San Joaquin still distant

SCOTT SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 10/23/2016



The first leg of the San Joaquin River restoration project is seen during a tour in Friant on Oct. 5. A major milestone is expected to be reached by the end of the month. PHOTO BY GARY KAZANJIAN/AP

FRESNO - A decade ago, environmentalists and the federal government agreed to revive a 150-mile stretch of California's second-longest river, an ambitious effort aimed at allowing salmon again to swim up to the Sierra Nevada foothills to spawn.

A major milestone is expected by the end of the month, when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation says the stretch of the San Joaquin River will be flowing year-round for the first time in more than 60 years.

But the goal of restoring native salmon remains far out of reach.

The original plan was to complete the task in 2012. Now, federal officials expect it will occur in 2022.

And the government's original estimate of \$800 million has ballooned to about \$1.7 billion.

"I think we all had hoped we'd be further along," said Doug Obegi, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, which led the lawsuit that produced the deal with the government to bring back salmon. "Restoring the state's second-largest river was never to be a cakewalk."

James Nickel is among the farmers in the fertile San Joaquin Valley region around Fresno questioning whether the project should go forward.

California is enduring a fifth year of drought, and many farmers have experienced sharp curtailments in water allotments from the government, leaving some fields fallow.

Nickel, a fifth-generation farmer on land along the river, doubts the wisdom of spending money on an intricate system of passages to get salmon around the river's many dams and siphoning off more water from agriculture.

"Most practical folks would look at it and say, 'Impossible,' " Nickel said. "It seemed like a waste."

Scientists say salmon are a keystone species for the region. For thousands of years, salmon spawned and died, their decomposing bodies feeding nutrients into the valley soil, helping make it one of the nation's most prosperous farming regions.

The San Joaquin River spans 366 miles and is among the state's most dammed rivers. It starts as snowmelt high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, cascades down through granite canyons and fills a reservoir at Friant Dam east of Fresno.

A few miles below Friant, the river has been running dry for much of the year. At Mendota, a community about 40 miles west of Fresno, the river resumes flowing with the help of various tributaries and eventually feeds into San Francisco Bay.

Before the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation opened Friant Dam in 1949, the river teemed with up to a half-million salmon a year and was deep enough that paddleboats transporting cargo could navigate far into to the San Joaquin Valley.

The dam gave farmers irrigation water that dramatically expanded agriculture but ended the salmon migration.

The Natural Resources Defense Council in 1988 set out to revive the river, filing a lawsuit that claimed the government's dam and irrigation channels favored commerce at the native salmon's expense.

The battle ended in a 2006 settlement that requires farmers to give up roughly 18 percent of the water captured behind Friant Dam. It also set an aggressive schedule to bring back natural salmon runs by 2012.

"It was a longshot, to say the least, that everything would be executed on that timeline," said Jason Phillips, who led early efforts by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to restore the river.

Today, he's CEO of the Friant Water Authority, which provides water primarily from the dam to growers irrigating 1 million acres of farmland.

He calls it an "open question" whether the San Joaquin can be revived as envisioned under the settlement.

He said water for farms has become even scarcer since the settlement was reached with tightening regulations. And forecasts of climate change's impact on California's water supply weren't calculated into the deal, he said.

Adding complexity, officials say, in a 2012 attempt to flow the river, water seeped onto a farmer's field, destroying his tomato crop, a broad issue that has plagued the project.

Construction has not yet begun on passages for migrating salmon to swim around two dams on a lower stretch of the river that distribute water to farmers. Design for one abruptly halted in 2013, when engineers found the ground was sinking at an alarming pace — the result of farmers pumping groundwater to irrigate. For now, state wildlife officials are raising salmon in tanks on the riverbank in small numbers and trucking them past obstacles to spawn.

Plans call for reviving a migration of roughly 40,000 a year once the obstacles are cleared, allowing salmon to swim on their own from the Pacific up to the base of Friant Dam.

Money is another question. The project is to be funded through state and federal sources. Much of the federal funding, however, needs Congress' approval each year, creating a degree of uncertainty, said Alicia Forsythe, current manager of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Forsythe defended the project's slow pace, saying officials have spent time collaborating with farmers along the river rather than simply forcing the project on them.

Rene Henery, California science director for Trout Unlimited, a party to the lawsuit, said the state lost sight of the river's essential role in its rush to develop a vast system of dams, reservoirs and canals that spawned a thriving farm economy.

He noted other large government projects — bridges, airports and mass transit systems — often run over budget and past deadlines, but the benefits outweigh the costs in this restoration project.

The San Joaquin will help recharge the valley's depleted groundwater supplies that have caused the land to sink and will open recreation opportunities, spurring their own economic vitality, he said.

Most importantly, he said, salmon will again migrate from the Pacific hundreds of miles inland forming a critical link between the land and sea.

"Water is the most important element for life on this planet," Henery said. "Our rivers, they're the vascular system of our landscape and of our societies."

No simple answers remain for county water issues

CHERI CARLSON

Ventura County Star 10/23/2016

After five years of drought, no easy answers are left.

Wells have run dry, lake levels have dropped to historic lows and last winter's predicted storms were no-shows.

That is, at least in the southern half of the state, leaving areas dependent on local rainfall some of the hardest hit.

Those importing water, however, got a bit of reprieve as storms boosted supplies in Northern California.

Just a few years ago, the opposite was true.

Back then, Lake Casitas in the Ojai Valley was still relatively full. But state

This is part of a series of the stories exploring the impact of the drought and declining water supplies in Ventura County. Have an idea for a future report? Email your suggestion to ccarlson@vcstar.com.

water allocations dropped as California went through one of its driest years on record.

"No supply is the be-all, end-all," said Susan Mulligan, general manager of the Calleguas Municipal Water District in Thousand Oaks.

"The more — different — supplies you have, the better off you are."

Risks to existing water sources have pushed several local agencies to work together to boost their supplies.

Calleguas already gets imported state water but wants to secure a local emergency supply. Others want to tap into state water.

The Ojai Valley and Ventura are dependent on local sources, including Lake Casitas, which now sits just 36 percent full.

"This is the first time we've been here in over 57 years," said Steve Wickstrum, general manager of Casitas Municipal Water District.

Imported water comes at a cost and has its own issues with reliability, he said.

"Now, we're looking at that as another answer for relieving this drought, should we get to the bottom of the barrel at Lake Casitas."

Existing supplies at risk

About 75 percent of Ventura County's population gets imported water through Calleguas, which serves communities from Simi Valley to Port Hueneme.

The local district buys its imported water from the Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles, which has a pipeline that runs from Castaic Lake north of Santa Clarita through the San Fernando Valley.

Calleguas then has its own pipes to carry water from Chatsworth to just west of Somis and about seven miles shy of Ventura.

That's where a new project comes in.

Ventura Water has proposed building a pipeline that would carry water the rest of the way to its customers.

If everything goes according to plan, a connection could be completed in three years, Ventura Water General Manager Shana Epstein said.

"That's an 'if,' " she said. That would mean no delays.

For Ventura, the drought didn't trigger the plans, Epstein said. "This is something that has actually been in our budget for a long time," she said.

One major reason involves its plan to recycle and reuse water. The city likely will need a connection to another reliable outside water supply to get its permit for the project, she said.

The city already has groundwater supplies and gets water from Lake Casitas, but both sources have been hit hard by hot, dry conditions over the past several years.

"We need to be investing in our water resources as a long-term, constant process. We need to know that water is not going to get cheaper, and that we should always be diversifying our water portfolio," Epstein said.

"We know that there are risks out there to our existing supplies," she said.

Ventura isn't alone in wanting such a project. Casitas and others also have come on board.

"Things are moving forward," Wickstrum said. "It takes time to figure out how to do it, figure out who's going to pay for it, how much it's going to be."

Even with a connection from Calleguas to Ventura, things get a little complicated getting the water to Casitas' customers. The pipes exist, but it means moving water uphill to the Rincon area, Oak View and Ojai.

"There are a lot of hurdles," Wickstrum said. "It's not as simple as, 'We'll just connect to it,' and that's all there is to it."

Finding an emergency supply

While most of the agencies around the table want to tap into state water, Calleguas wants a different sort of backup supply.

In January 1994, the Northridge earthquake knocked out Calleguas' connection to state water. "We were cut off for about three months," Mulligan said.

The agency relied on what it already had in its system and got some help from United Water Conservation District, which supplied additional water to the Oxnard area, she said.

Calleguas made it through.

“But we came very close to not having water,” Mulligan said.

“There has been a lot of growth since then,” she said.

Plus, that was in the winter, when water use generally drops off.

Not wanting to face a similar situation again, Calleguas officials want to pre-deliver water to Ventura once a connection is made. Then in an emergency, Ventura could deliver water back.

Back in the early 1990s, during another punishing drought, local agencies also considered tapping into state water.

At the time, one option was to build a pipeline to get state water from Castaic Lake east of Piru, down the Highway 126 corridor to the east end of Ventura. The route was much longer and would take more time and more money to build than the current proposal.

Officials also considered building a seawater desalination plant. But neither option came to be and the drought ended.

Wickstrum said he doesn’t want that to happen this time.

“I’ve learned from ‘92 that we shouldn’t disband just because we got a good year of rainfall,” he said.

“I think everybody is on board to try to get this mission accomplished this time around. I hope we wouldn’t take that direction again and rest on our laurels of rainfall again.”

Pa. gas spill has little impact on water

Storm ruptured pipeline, caused major flooding



A rescue team on a flooded McIntyre Way in Trout Run, Pa., heads out to aid another team of volunteer firefighters whose boat became snagged in flood debris and then deflated Friday. A storm late Thursday into Friday dumped up to 7 inches of rain in western and central Pennsylvania. PHILIP A. HOLMES/SUN-GAZETTE VIA AP

RON TODT AND MARK SCOLFORO ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 10/23/2016

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. - There has been little impact to the water supply so far from a ruptured pipeline during a freak storm in Pennsylvania that sent nearly 55,000 gallons of gasoline into a creek tributary, officials said Saturday.

But authorities are continuing to monitor the water supplies that serve thousands of residents around Williamsport.

A storm late Thursday into Friday dumped up to 7 inches of rain on areas in western and central Pennsylvania, triggering mudslides, turning roads into rivers and sweeping away at least two houses. Hundreds more buildings were damaged in Centre County, home to Penn State's main campus. One man was killed when a tree crashed into his home.

The flooding caused an 8-inch Sunoco Logistics pipeline that carries gasoline, diesel and home heating oil to rupture, spilling an estimated 54,600 gallons of gasoline into a tributary of the Loyalsock Creek. The creek runs into the west branch of the Susquehanna River, but the company said Saturday that "no petroleum-related compounds" had been detected in the river.

“We don’t have any indication that water supplies have been affected at this point, but we’ll continue to monitor that,” said Sunoco Logistics spokesman Jeff Shields, who said the company was working with state and federal environmental departments. Crews have deployed skimmers to try to pick up gasoline from the surface of the water and booms to contain and absorb it.

“But we really haven’t found much of the product so far,” he said. “There was a lot of water that came down that night.” Crews are waiting for the water to recede and expose the pipe so they can access it and formulate a repair plan, he said.

A bridge at the site of the spill was completely washed out. The exact cause of the release is under investigation.

Air quality is also being monitored, and no hazardous levels have been detected, “although gasoline odors remain in certain areas,” Shields said.

The overnight deluge occurred in an extremely narrow band, said meteorologist Mike Dangelo of the National Weather Service office in State College.

Gov. Tom Wolf ordered the state’s National Guard to help in the recovery efforts after the storm left a trail of destruction stretching 150 miles. The toll included downed power lines, destroyed vehicles and damaged railroad beds.

The (Lock Haven) Express reported a popular retired teacher was killed Thursday night in Clinton County when a tree crashed into his home. The man had been on the second floor and was tossed from his home by the impact, landing on his back in the driveway.

About 100 residents were forced from their homes in the Bald Eagle Valley, including about three dozen residents of a personal care home, Centre County Commissioner Steven Dershem said.

Your Water... Your Questions



If these or similar questions have been on your mind lately, we invite you to join us for a...

Community Meeting

When: Tuesday, October 25th - 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Oxnard Main Library, 251 South A St., Oxnard, CA

Calleguas MWD staff will provide a comprehensive overview of all things water and answer your questions regarding the source of your supply, lingering drought conditions and conflicts, regional and statewide efforts to boost reliability, and the future of water in Ventura County.

Hosted by...



As seating is limited, please register online at <http://ow.ly/EZf1304TOQH>

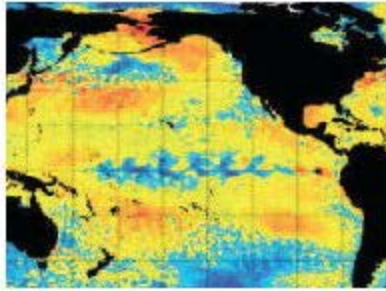
The meeting will be streamed on Facebook Live

More information... info@calleguas.com

Follow us on  and at www.calleguas.com for critical water resource updates

Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

Week ending Friday, October 21, 2016



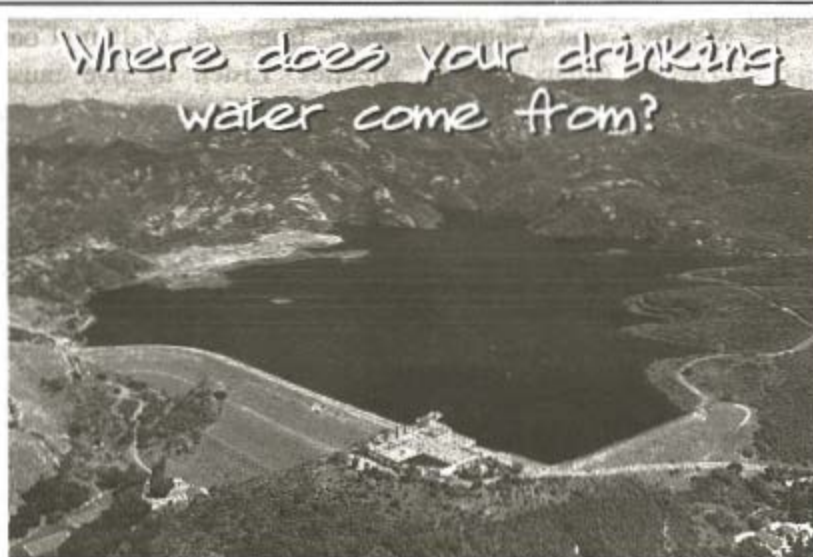
This sea surface temperature anomaly graphic from Oct. 17, 2016, shows waves of cool water moving westward along the equator. Image: NOAA

La Niña Reborn

Some worldwide weather agencies have shifted predictions toward a developing La Niña in the Pacific this Northern Hemisphere autumn, only a month after writing the obituary for the ocean-cooling phenomenon.

The U.S. agency NOAA now says there is a 70 percent chance of a weak La Niña. The World Meteorological Organization gives it a 50 to 60 percent probability of forming by the end of the year and persisting through the first three months of 2017.

While La Niña appeared to be developing a few months ago as the tropical Pacific began to cool, the surface winds above it failed to develop the distinct east-to-west circulation associated with the phenomenon until late September.



Join us for a special tour and learning adventure

**Saturday November 5, 2016,
8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Go "behind the scenes" to look at the planning, infrastructure and challenges to delivering safe, reliable, high quality water to your home everyday.

Reservations are a must for this *FREE* tour.

Preference given to customers of
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.



Register on-line at:
www.LVMWD.com/QuarterlyTours

*Continental breakfast and light lunch provided.
Moderate walking and stairways. Restricted to ages 10 and
older; children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.*

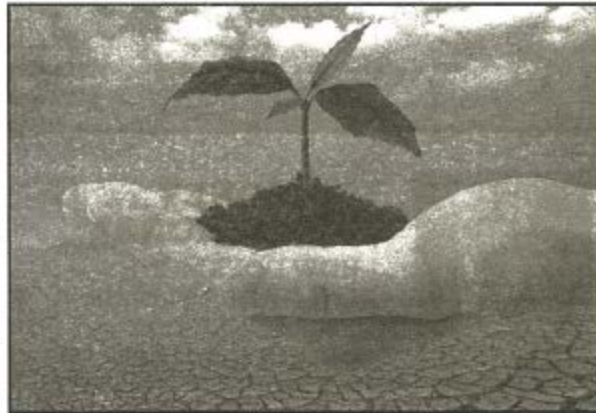
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Ready, Set, GROW!

After the long summer growing season, it's time to replenish your soil's lost nutrients with FREE Rancho Las Virgenes Community Compost.

By adding it now, the compost will have time to mix with your soil, help it retain moisture and prepare your lawn and garden for a great start next spring.

RLV compost qualifies for the USEPA's "Class-A Exceptional Quality" rating and is the preferred choice of many local gardeners and professional landscapers.



Anyone can pick up FREE compost every Saturday, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at our Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility located at 3700 Las Virgenes Rd in Calabasas.



For more information, visit www.LVMWD.com/community-compost.



Community

Faces from the Pumpkin Festival

The annual Pumpkin Festival this past weekend drew families, friends, local businesses, politicians and costumed characters both young and old.

Judy Roberts of the Las Virgenes Water District made the festival rounds with "Little Drop"



TWICE IS NICE.

Water your yard twice
a week max.



**SAVE
the
DROP**
SAVE THE DROPLA.ORG



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No DRUGS

Any questions?

*Protect the environment!
Dispose of drugs at take-back facilities.*



Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority



Special Limited-Time Offer for LVMWD Customers

Get Two FREE Rain Barrels and an Installation Rebate of up to \$250!

Get ready for winter and be prepared to capture this year's rain by installing two FREE rain barrels at your home.

This special offer is open to LVMWD residential customers, along with a rebate of up to \$250 for having two barrels installed at your home.

To reserve your 55-gallon rain barrels, register online at www.LVMWD.com/Rain-Barrels.

To pre-order your rain barrels, you will need the customer number from your LVMWD service bill. When the rain barrels arrive at LVMWD, you will be notified when to come and pick them up. Sorry, LVMWD is unable to provide home delivery of rain barrels.

To claim the installation rebate (\$125 per barrel), just register for the rebate online. You must later provide "before and after" photos showing the installation which must comply with the standards found at the LVMWD website. You can "do it yourself" or have a rain gutter specialist do the work for you, but the installation must be completed by November 30, 2016.

Visit www.LVMWD.com/Rain-Barrels for more program details!



This year, use nature's free water to help maintain your gardens, shrubs or trees. Hurry – this offer is good only while supplies last!

For more information and the terms and conditions governing this program, go to www.LVMWD.com/Rain-Barrels.