

NEWS CLIPS

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23 AC2B

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23A21B

Watering restrictions relaxed

Simi, T.O. respond to governor's move

MIKE HARRIS

Ventura County Star 6/08/2017

Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks have relaxed their water irrigation restrictions in response to Gov. Jerry Brown in April declaring California's long drought over in the vast majority of the state.

The Simi Valley City Council on Monday night rescinded its Water Supply Shortage Resolution and approved a less stringent Level One Water Supply condition.

The Thousand Oaks City Council last week lifted Level One water restrictions, returning the city to its more flexible permanent water conservation measures.

The Simi Valley council in July adopted the Water Supply Shortage Resolution, which restricted irrigation to three days a week in the spring and summer and two days a week in the fall and winter.

"Staff recommends relaxing the current water use restrictions, but maintaining voluntary measures," Simi Valley Public Works Director Ron Fuchiwaki wrote in a memo to the council. "Since the drought is over ... customers could be allowed more liberal water use allowance."

The council agreed, reinstating the less severe Level One Water Supply condition.

It is essentially a voluntary conservation program, in which customers are requested to conserve and use water efficiently, Fuchiwaki wrote. Residents can now irrigate seven days a week, but with restrictions. Under permanent water conservation regulations adopted by the council in 2009, residents cannot irrigate between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and in general cannot irrigate more than 15 minutes a day. There are other restrictions, as well. More information on the permanent water conservation regulations can be found on the city's website, www.simivalley.org/waterconservation.

Thousand Oaks' now rescinded Level One restrictions, also adopted in July, also limited irrigation to three days a week in the spring and summer and two days a week in the fall and winter. Watering in Thousand Oaks is now permitted seven days a week. But under the city's permanent water conservation measures enacted in 2009, irrigation is prohibited between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. with some exceptions. For instance, watering during those hours is allowed if it is done using a hand-held bucket or a hose equipped with a self-closing water shut-off nozzle or device.

The measures also place limits on watering duration, forbid excessive water flow or runoff and in general restrict the washing down of paved surfaces, among other stipulations. A complete list of Thousand Oaks' permanent conservation measures can be found on the city's website, www.toaks.org.

In addition to those measures, the governor's prohibition against watering during, and 48 hours after, measurable rain remain in effect, as it also does in Simi Valley.

"Droughts come and go, and the population continues to increase," Thousand Oaks Public Works Director Jay Spurgin wrote in a report to the council. "As such, water conservation remains for now and into the future."

Homeowners who have let their lawns die or go brown in response to the drought will need time to re-establish landscaping, Spurgin wrote.

"Time is ... needed to publicize the changes, for homeowners to respond and to avoid replanting during the summer when it would require extensive watering," he wrote. Accordingly, while city code compliance staff will respond to complaints immediately, property owners be given until Nov. 30 to comply, Spurgin said. "We encourage a drought-friendly type of landscaping," he said.

Enforcement will be focused on voluntary compliance through education, but fines of up to \$500 per occurrence will be levied on repeat offenders, according to the city. More information on water conservation in Thousand Oaks can also be found on the city's website, www.toaks.org.

After one of the rainiest seasons ever recorded in California, Brown on April 7 issued an executive order rescinding his 2014 drought declaration for the vast majority of the state — everywhere but Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Tuolumne counties in Central California.

But in doing so, the governor struck a cautious note. "This drought emergency is over, but the next drought could be around the corner," he said in a prepared statement. "Conservation must remain a way of life."

Water release to recharge basins

Historic rains create excess in N. California

ARLENE MARTINEZ
Ventura County Star 6/08/2017

Over the next several weeks, millions of gallons of water will leave the Vern Freeman Diversion Dam near Saticoy, bound for groundwater basins throughout Ventura County.

The water, 10,000 acre-feet, will have traveled by way of Castaic Lake, Castaic Creek and the Santa Clara River, and will have originated in Northern California. At the river, it's being joined by 15,000 acre-feet from United Water Conservation District's Lake Piru.

It's the first dam release by the United Water Conservation District in six years, officials said, and marks the first time United has bought state water.

The move is a "proactive approach to procure some alternative water resources," General Manager Mauricio Guardado said. "It's really a win-win for everybody, and some very cost-effective water."

The district grabbed the excess water that became available after historic rains pushed some storage facilities to capacity, through what's known as the Article 21 Program.

The district, which owns Lake Piru and the Santa Felicia Dam in eastern Ventura County, paid \$2 million for the water, which will be released over the next four to five weeks, Guardado said.



**Lake Piru water heads to Piru Creek, which eventually meets the Santa Clara River.
STAR FILE PHOTO**

The slow release of the water helps offset losses from water diverted for endangered species, replenishes groundwater basin levels that remain at record lows from the ongoing drought and ensures that water quality levels remain high, Guardado said.

Although the drought has ended in most of California, the latest map from the U.S. Drought Monitor, released last week, has Ventura County in the moderate drought category.

Headquartered in Santa Paula, United is a major player in local groundwater management, both for west

county farmers and many residents. Its basins touch supplies in Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, Santa Paula and Fillmore. It manages releases from Lake Piru to provide drinking and irrigation water and provide habitat for the endangered steelhead.

Years of drought have taken their toll on groundwater basins, which is why United sought the extra water and the large release. When water levels drop, the water has higher concentrations of nitrate, metals, salt and other characteristics that in high doses are problematic.

The water quality hasn't been an issue so far but United wanted to make sure that didn't happen, Guardado said. United's goal is to manage and enhance water supplies, he added. "This project does that."

Well-drilling bill draws ire of California farm groups

IAN JAMES THE DESERT SUN
Ventura County Star 6/05/2017

California farmers have long been able to get permits to drill new wells in areas where groundwater levels are falling without publicly saying how much water they intend to pump. That would change under a bill approved this week by the California Senate.

The legislation would require those drilling new wells in groundwater basins that are in “critical overdraft” to notify neighbors they’re applying for a well-drilling permit and provide information about the proposed well to the local agency in charge of approving the permit.

“For so long, water wells have just been able to be drilled with little or no information. And this is why we have the problems in our groundwater basins today,” Sen. Bill Dodd, a Napa Democrat who introduced the bill.

Dodd said the legislation’s purpose is to bring transparency to the well-drilling permit system and let neighbors know before a new well is drilled.

He pointed to the many household wells that went dry in the San Joaquin Valley during the drought, and to areas where the ground is sinking due to overpumping — causing costly damage to canals, roads and other infrastructure.

“Doing nothing, it’s just simply not sustainable,” Dodd said. “Anybody else who has a well right now in one of these critically overdrafted groundwater basins should really want to know what’s going on there.”

The measure, which was passed by the Senate on Tuesday, focuses on 21 groundwater basins across the state that are classified as being in a state of “critical overdraft,” from Kern County to Paso Robles.

A list of influential farm groups have opposed the legislation, which will next go before the state Assembly.

If the bill passes, cities and counties that receive applications for well-drilling permits would be required to make information publicly available about each proposed well, such as the location, depth and pumping capacity. Cities and counties would also have to issue a notice and accept public comments before issuing a permit.

The bill is intended to temporarily step up regulation until local agencies establish plans for combating aquifer overdraft under California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2014.

Under that law, the 21 groundwater basins with the most severe overdraft problems have until 2020 to adopt 20-year plans for achieving sustainable management — defined as managing aquifers in ways that avoid chronic declines or saltwater intrusion.

Dodd’s legislation, Senate Bill 252, would expire once the state approves local groundwater plans in 2020.

“My bill is just an interim step, really, to make sure that we don’t continue to overdraft at a higher level than we already are,” Dodd said. “It just puts people on notice every time a new agricultural or commercial water well is put in place.”

Residential wells would be exempt under the measure. Wells that have gone dry could also be redrilled without any new requirements.

Last year, a bill that would have imposed stricter regulation died in the Legislature. Sen. Lois Wolk introduced that bill, which would have prohibited the drilling of most new wells in “critical overdraft” basins.

Dodd’s new bill would apply in coastal areas such as Oxnard and Soquel Valley, Borrego Valley in the desert, and areas including Madera, Kaweah and Eastern San Joaquin in the Central Valley. It wouldn’t apply in other areas deemed high- or medium- priority — such as the Coachella Valley, where state regulators have listed three aquifer sub-basins as being medium-priority.

Groups backing the legislation include The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund and the Community Water Center, among others.

“This information is important. It’s important because we know that groundwater well-drilling has actually seen a really significant increase over the last few years,” said Juliet Christian-Smith, a water expert with the Union of Concerned Scientists. “Who could be against transparency? Unfortunately, the answer is a lot of really powerful people.”

The coalition of agriculture groups lobbying against the legislation includes the California Farm Bureau Federation, the Western Growers Association, the Almond Alliance of California and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, among others.

The farm groups said in a statement to lawmakers that the bill would take management decisions “out of the hands of the locals in critically overdrafted basins.” They said the legislation would infringe on property rights, impose a burden on applicants for drilling permits and increase the potential for costly adjudications of groundwater basins in the courts.

Other groups opposing the bill in its current form include the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, and the Rural County Representatives of California. They said in an April letter to Sen. Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) that SB 252 would place an additional burden on local agencies.

The Association of California Water Agencies, which represents more than 400 public water agencies, also voiced opposition.

In a letter, the association said “there are privacy issues concerning public disclosure of private well information.” It urged lawmakers to allow time for the 2014 groundwater law to work properly at the local level.

Dodd argued that it doesn’t make sense to wait until 2020.

To make his case for urgent action, he cited a number in a recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California: nearly 2 million acre-feet, or 650 billion gallons. The report said that's been the average overdraft per year in the San Joaquin Valley over the past three decades.

California's five-year drought was the most severe in the state's modern history. Brown declared the end of the drought emergency in most of the state in April after one of the wettest winters on record, which refilled reservoirs and sent water pouring over the tops of dams from Oroville to Shasta Lake.

Groundwater levels, however, have declined to record lows in many parts of California. And efforts to replenish badly depleted aquifers, which have receded over decades through wet and dry spells, will take much longer.

Scientists say the state's efforts to manage groundwater will be increasingly important because climate change is projected to lead to diminishing snowpack and more extreme weather swings.

Christian-Smith said it's a problem that thousands of new wells have been drilled in recent years in areas where aquifers are in decline and that permits are continuing to be issued without any public notification for even more wells.

If that trend continues, she said, it will be even harder for communities to bring their aquifers to a sustainable balance by 2040, as required by California's groundwater law.

"It's very important over the next three to five years," she said, "that we don't dig the groundwater hole so deep that there's no way we can get out of it over the 20-year time period."



Workers drill an agricultural well in Tulare County in 2015. IAN JAMES/THE DESERT SUN

Districts eye water-tunnel role

Plan's critics fear toll on safety, environment

ELLEN KNICKMEYER AND SCOTT SMITH
ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 6/03/2017

FRESNO - California's powerful regional water districts are working alongside Gov. Jerry Brown to take on more responsibility for designing, building and arranging financing for a \$15.7 billion twin tunnel project that would ship water southward from Northern California as they push to finally close the deal on the controversial plan, two officials working closely on the project told The Associated Press.

Talks among Brown's office, state agencies and the water contractors have been underway since May that could lessen the state's hands-on role in one of California's biggest water projects in decades, according to the two sources, one a senior official involved in the project, the other an employee working closely on the project.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly reveal details of the talks.

Some water district officials said the move, to be done by a group of regional California water agencies in what is called a joint-powers authority, or JPA, would speed up the mega-project, which they say is needed to modernize California's existing north-south water delivery systems.

Critics who oppose the tunnels said the change could allow California's big water districts to cut corners on issues affecting public safety and the environment.

Asked for comment, state spokeswoman Nancy Vogel said Friday that talks were under way between the state Department of Water Resources and the regional water agencies "on the structure of the entity that would design and build WaterFix," which is the name Brown's administration has given the proposed tunnels. "Details have not been finalized, but our shared goal is a structure that assures the best design and construction talent and protects state oversight," Vogel said. Brown's press office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Brown long has pushed projects that would streamline the delivery of water from the delta of Northern California's biggest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin, southward to water districts selling water to cities and farms, mostly in Central and Southern California. The current plan calls for 35 miles of two 40-foot high tunnels.

The group of water agencies, which includes the biggest urban and agricultural water suppliers in the United States, has engaged in years of talks on the tunnels, but the current proposal as described by the two people involved would give the agencies a substantially bigger role in shaping the final outcome.

"The water contractors don't believe DWR is capable of delivering a \$15 billion project," said the employee working on the project.

The water agencies forming the JPA for financing and construction is something that they think makes sense, said the senior official. He said the state would still play a role.

Patricia Schifferle, an environmental consultant who opposes the proposed tunnels, contended the water districts that would get and sell water from the tunnels long have pushed for a more direct role building them.

“It’s an outrageous takeover of a public process and public resources,” Schifferle said.

This spring, Brown’s administration has pushed especially hard for the water districts, which want the tunnels in theory but fear the costs, to commit to a plan for paying for the project so construction can get under way before Brown leaves office next year.

Many see it as a legacy project in the vein of Brown’s father, Gov. Pat Brown, who built much of California’s existing water infrastructure, and Brown has mocked critics, telling an audience in 2015: “Until you’ve put a million hours into it, shut up, because you don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.”

Advocates for the tunnels say they would provide more reliable water to the 25 million Californians to the south who get some or all of their water from California’s north-south water delivery systems. Opponents say the project would harm the delta and the San Francisco Bay, and the communities and already struggling native species that get their water there.

Delta residents have accused the state Department of Water Resources of already delegating too much decision-making to the water contractors that would benefit from them financially.

The aim is for water districts that would take part in the tunnels project, mainly in Central and Southern California, to make a final decision by September if they are on board with the project or not, the official said. Water districts then would sign an agreement with the state giving them a greater role in financing, design and construction. Officials would break ground on the years-long project in summer of 2018, assuming state and federal regulators give all the needed approvals.

Tom Birmingham, general manager for Fresno-based Westlands Water District, one of the water agencies in the talks, denied that the proposal under consideration now would give water agencies a bigger role in the design and building of the tunnels.

But he acknowledged water districts have concerns about how well the state DWR can take on the complex tunnels project given other pressing jobs, including repairing two dam spillways that ruptured this winter at one of the state’s most vital water reservoirs.

“It’s not a question of DWR not being able to get it done,” Birmingham said. “It’s a question of how are we able to move this forward.”

Knickmeyer reported from San Francisco.



Water flows through an irrigation canal near Lemoore in 2015. California's regional water districts are working with Gov. Jerry Brown to take on more responsibility for designing, building and financing a \$15.7 billion twin tunnel project. RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

Report fuels debate on desalination plant project

State commission says water discharged from the proposed facility in Huntington Beach could hurt marine life.

By Ben Brazil
LA Times 6/03/2017

The protracted debate over Poseidon Water's proposed ocean desalination plant in Huntington Beach was renewed this week when the State Lands Commission released a draft report analyzing planned additions meant to reduce potential harm to marine life and increase the plant's efficiency.

The supplement to a 2010 environmental impact report addresses the possible effects of a screen and diffuser added to the intake and outflow pipes, respectively, that would be used by the \$1-billion desalination facility proposed at Newland Street and Pacific Coast Highway.

The State Lands Commission report concluded that the screen on the intake pipe would help reduce harm to marine animals. The 2010 report had already concluded that the intake wouldn't significantly impact sea life.

The screen would have 1-millimeter segments to keep marine life from being sucked into the tube.

The diffuser would enable salt water leaving the plant to better mix with the ocean because it would be sprayed in multiple directions.

Opponents of the plant are concerned that the returning salt water is especially briny after it is separated in the desalination process, and that if it doesn't mix well when it goes back to the ocean, the high concentrations could harm marine life.

The commission report said the salinity of discharges through the diffuser wouldn't pose a significant threat to marine populations.

The commission did conclude, however, that the force of water from the diffuser could put unidentified sea creatures at significant risk, though it said it could not find such special species during its investigation.

Poseidon Vice President Scott Maloni called that finding "scientifically unsound."

"We don't think there is evidence that there will be any significant impact to any species, not to mention a species with special status," he said.

Ray Hiemstra, associate director of programs at Orange County Coastkeeper, a Costa Mesa-based environmental group, said the commission should have conducted a full EIR rather than focusing on the intake and outflow systems, citing changes in the project over the past seven years.

He said he also believes the new system would do little to protect small fish.

Maloni has said that the company determined the open-faced intake pipe called for in the earlier plan would take in about two fish eggs for every 1,000 gallons of water, an amount he characterized as small. He said the amount would be even smaller with a screen in place.

The commission said the copper-nickel material of the proposed wedge wire screen could leach and affect water quality nearby.

The panel said a superior alternative would be a stainless-steel wedge wire screen because it wouldn't leach as badly. But that type of screen also poses issues because it is subject to accumulation of organisms on the surface, or biofouling, the report said.

Maloni said copper-nickel is preferred because it balances corrosion with biofouling. He added that the proposed steel screen hasn't been tested in an open ocean setting so it's not clear it's a feasible alternative.

The report also listed issues that could arise during construction of the system, including increased emissions into the air and underwater noise affecting marine animals.

The public can comment on the draft report until July 12.

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Brazil writes for Times Community News.



Finalists Awarded in Student Art Contest

Twelve local students have been recognized as finalists in Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD)'s annual Water Awareness Student Art Contest at a ceremony held during the District's Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, May 23, 2017.

The honored artworks were selected from more than 3,500 entries created and submitted by elementary and middle school students within the LVMWD service area. Artworks were created using different types of media, including watercolors, pastels, markers and crayons—all centering on the importance of water in our daily lives.

Families, teachers and school officials joined the student

finalists at the recognition ceremony. Each student was presented with a personalized Certificate of Recognition and t-shirt, featuring their artwork.

The Ann Dorgelo Water Awareness Award, a perpetual traveling trophy, was presented to the school of the top finalist. Named for a long-term LVMWD board member in recognition of her commitment to excellence in education, the trophy will be proudly displayed at Willow Elementary in Agoura Hills for the coming school year. The top finalist is Addison Abrar, a 5th grader in Mr. Borg's class. Her "Life Without Water Is No Life at All" drawing reminds us that water is essential to all living things.

The 11 other finalists

in this year's contest are:

Zobia Ahmed, a 4th grader in Ms. Kodama's class at Bay Laurel Elementary in Calabasas.

Sofia Francini, a 4th grader in Mr. Squire's class at Round Meadow Elementary in Hidden Hills.

Clara Polsky, a 7th grader in Ms. Cortina's class at Mariposa School of Global Education in Agoura Hills.

Chloe Kamrath, a 5th grader in Mrs. Lorch's class at Sumac L-STEM Elementary in Agoura Hills.

Jordana Rojany, a 5th grader in Ms. Hessick's class at Willow Elementary.

Tea Damascus, a 4th grader in Mrs. Sallin's class at Round Meadow Elementary.

Sloane Katzman, a 5th grader in Mrs. Lorch's class at Sumac L-STEM Elementary. Taylor Robertson, a 5th grader in Mrs. Jacobson's class at Yerba Buena Elementary in Agoura Hills.

Kimia Pharrapur, a 1st grader in Ms. Finigan's class at Yerba Buena Elementary.

Addison Copas, a 5th grader in Miss Rosen's class at Yerba Buena Elementary. Maya Minguela, a 7th grader in Ms. Cortina's class at Mariposa School of Global Education.

The top 12 artworks can be viewed at LVMWD.com/2017-student-art-contest-finalists.



The winning poster from Addison Abrar of Willow Elementary.

Droughts Come & Go...

Efficient Water Use is Here to Stay



On April 7, 2017, Governor Brown ended the drought emergency
BUT. . .These Restrictions Remain In Effect



Efficient water use saves water and money.
Visit www.LVMWD.com/Conservation for more ways to be efficient.

Valley News Group, June 1, 2017