

NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public
Outreach**

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Lawsuits challenge water tunnels

Fish, conservation groups hope to stop ambitious project

SCOTT SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 6/30/2017

FRESNO - Gov. Jerry Brown's ambitious plans to build two massive tunnels, reengineering the hub of California's water system, would destroy native fish species already on the brink of extinction, lawsuits filed Thursday said.

The \$16 billion proposed tunnels along the state's largest river won a critical first round of approval from two federal agencies early this week, but days later a group of fish and conservation groups filed federal lawsuits attempting to stop the project.

"Politics has trumped science once again," Doug Obegi, a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The agencies tasked with protecting our natural resources are making things worse."

The proposed twin tunnels, both four stories high and 35 miles (55 kilometer) long, would be California's most ambitious water project in decades.

State officials say the tunnels are needed to reengineer the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, the largest estuary on the West Coast, which provides water to much of the nation's most populous state.

The Sacramento and San Joaquin — two of California's largest rivers — send mountain snowmelt into the delta and then out to sea through the San Francisco Bay.

Water is currently pumped from the delta and sent south through hundreds of miles of canals to farms in the vast San Joaquin Valley and communities as far south as San Diego.

Supporters say the tunnels will modernize and secure water deliveries from the delta, now done by aging pumps that pull the rivers and the fish in them offcourse.

The project won a first critical round of approval Monday from National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

They ruled that the project would not lead to the extinction of endangered and threatened native species, including some salmon species and the Delta smelt.

State officials say they have added thousands of acres of habitat restoration, boosting chances that the imperiled fish species will survive. The plan doesn't convince the fish and conservation groups filing lawsuits.

"This version of the tunnels will wipe out California's salmon fishery and the families and communities that rely on salmon," said John McManus, executive director of the Golden Gate Salmon Association.

He's joined in the two lawsuits by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife and the Bay Institute.

Before construction can begin, the project requires approval from other state and federal agencies.

Local districts that serve farms and communities have yet to confirm their commitment to paying for the tunnels.

Nancy Vogel of the California Natural Resources Agency declined to comment.



Water flows through an irrigation canal to crops near Lemoore, Calif., in 2016. Environmental and fishing groups have filed challenges Thursday seeking to block Gov. Jerry Brown's ambitious plan to build a pair of massive water tunnels in California. RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP FILE

State appears to be facing especially bad fire season

JOHN ANTCHAK ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 6/30/2017

LOS ANGELES - With nearly 30,000 acres charred already, California could be in for a severe wildfire season, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein said Thursday as firefighters worked to contain blazes around the state.

Feinstein cited the increase in brush spawned by the winter's heavy rains and the recent severe heat wave that dried out vegetation.

"Making matters worse, six years of drought has left us with more than 100 million dead trees," she said in a statement. "This overabundance of fuel, combined with fires that are burning hotter and faster, has created a potentially catastrophic scenario in California that poses an increased risk not only to property but also the brave men and women fighting these fires."

California has so far not had the type of infernos that have destroyed hundreds or thousands of homes in the past, but fires have been occurring from the Oregon border to San Diego County.

Most have been in wildlands but some have occurred dangerously close to homes, including two blazes among hillside residences in the Los Angeles area on Wednesday.

Active new blazes include a 700-acre wildfire burning on the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base in San Diego County and in neighboring brushlands of San Clemente, and a 630-acre blaze on the Mariposa County foothills of the western Sierra Nevada.

The Pendleton fire resulted in a smoke alert from regional air quality regulators as it spread a strong odor across Orange and Los Angeles counties early in the day.

The state's biggest current fire was 86 percent contained after burning across nearly 10 square miles (26 sq. kilometers) in Riverside

County, about 80 miles east of Los Angeles. Crews remained on the scene to complete the containment line and patrol the burn scar.

On the Central Coast, crews were also wrapping up a 2.5-square-mile (6.5sq. kilometer) fire in rural San Luis Obispo County.

The state has had more fires and more acreage burned so far this year than the same time last year even though the latter was part of the drought, said Scott McLean, spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.



Firefighters spray foam on the hillside below a home on Viewcrest Drive in Burbank on Wednesday. Dozens of homes were under mandatory evacuation orders. JOHN MCCOY/LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS VIA AP

Winning students named in poster contest

District honors annual Water Awareness artists



CREATIVITY GALORE—Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board president Glen Peterson with Willow Elementary School student Addison Abrar and principal Laura Kintz , who holds the traveling trophy.

Twelve students have been recognized as finalists in Las Virgenes Municipal Water District annual Water Awareness Student Art Contest at a ceremony held during the district's May 23 board of directors meeting.

The artwork was selected from more than 3,500 entries submitted by elementary and middle school students within the LVMWD service area.

The art included different types of media such as watercolors, pastels, markers and crayons, all centering on the importance of water in daily life.

Families, teachers and school officials joined the student finalists at the recognition ceremony. Each student received 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. The trophy was named for a long-term LVMWD board member in recognition of her commitment to excellence in education.

The trophy will be displayed at Willow Elementary in Agoura Hills for the coming school year. The top finalist is fifth-grader Addison Abrar. Her "Life Without Water Is No Life at All" drawing is a reminder that water is essential to all living things.

The 11 other finalists in this year's contest are:

Zobia Ahmed, fourth-grader at Bay Laurel Elementary in Calabasas.

Sofia Francini, fourth-grader at Round Meadow Elementary in Hidden Hills.

Clara Polsky, seventh-grader at Mariposa School of Global Education in Agoura Hills.

Chloe Kamrath, fifth-grader at Sumac L-STEM Elementary in Agoura Hills.

Jordana Rojany, fifth-grader at Willow Elementary.

Tea Damascus, fourth-grader at Round Meadow Elementary.

Sloane Katzman, fifth-grader at Sumac L-STEM Elementary.

Taylor Robertson, fifth-grader at Yerba Buena Elementary in Agoura Hills.

Kimia Pharrapur, first-grader at Yerba Buena Elementary.

Addison Copas, fifth-grader at Yerba Buena Elementary.

Maya Minguela, seventh-grader at Mariposa School of Global Education.

The top 12 art pieces can be viewed at LVMWD.com.

These artworks will also join those of past finalists on display at LVMWD headquarters on Las Virgenes Road.

This year's


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FIRE WATCH

Hot, dry air fuels five local blazes

Wildfires from Burbank to San Luis Obispo County and the Inland Empire prompt evacuations. Some homes have been lost.



A CREW cuts a fire line through the foothills above Hamline Place in Burbank. The fast-moving, 10-acre fire burned dangerously close to homes Wednesday and prompted mandatory evacuations. But fire officials expected it would be fully contained by day's end. (Tim Berger Burbank Leader)

**JOSEPH SERNA
LA Times 6/29/2017**

Firefighters on Wednesday increased containment around five Southern California wildfires that have gutted homes and cars and forced some residents to flee, according to state and federal officials.

The blazes started at the tail end of a brutal statewide heat wave that dried out valley grasses and brush-covered hillsides. Officials say California's wettest winter in more than a decade created a fresh crop of fuel spread across the state that has since dried out in the spring and summer heat.

Though temperatures are expected to dip Friday, warm, dry breezes are expected to return over the weekend, the National Weather Service said.

In response, the Angeles National Forest expects to raise the fire danger level from high to very high effective Friday, park officials announced.

"Live-fuel moisture levels in the shrubs and brush have decreased, grasses at lower elevations have cured, and fire activity has increased recently around the forest," officials said.

In the meantime, here's where the five fires in Southern California stood on Wednesday:

MANZANITA FIRE

Riverside County

6,309 acres

43% contained

The largest of them all, the fire was sparked Monday by a car crash along Highway 79 in the San Jacinto Mountains and has been fueled by high temperatures, low humidity and wind gusts of up to 35 mph that have pushed it east toward Banning.

Riverside County authorities said evacuation warnings remain in place for communities between Highland Home Road and Highway 243 — an area that includes Poppet Flats and Silent Valley.

A day earlier, those in voluntary evacuation areas said things appeared much less dire than they did Monday evening, when ash rained down and smoke and flames rose on the horizon.

"Last night it was iffy," Jeanie Crist, a 64-year-old resident of Silent Valley Club, told The Times on Tuesday.

The mood had returned to normal the next day, however, as campers went about their normal summer routines and lounged among oak trees, even as fire officials roamed the grounds and kept a watchful eye on matters.

MART FIRE

San Bernardino County

902 acres

15% contained

On Tuesday night, another blaze had popped up less than 30 miles to the north of the Manzanita fire and east of San Bernardino.

The Mart fire raced up a steep canyon in the San Bernardino Mountains about 3:15 p.m., and its flames came within feet of igniting a suburban hillside neighborhood, triggering evacuations. Firefighters managed to stop its advance with air power and ground crews.

The fire started near a Wal-Mart at Highland Avenue and Highway 330, a popular thoroughfare that leads to Big Bear. The fire has spread to more than 900 acres in the hills north of Highland, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

About 560 firefighters and emergency personnel were assigned to the blaze. The cause is under investigation.

HILL FIRE

San Luis Obispo County

1,598 acres

65% contained

In San Luis Obispo County, the Hill fire started Monday and was burning along eastern foothills of a coastal mountain range near Santa Margarita among secluded homes and tall, dry grass and vegetation.

According to TMZ, "Big Bang Theory" actor Johnny Galecki's ranch was destroyed in the blaze.

In a statement to the website, Galecki said: "My heart goes out to all in the area who are also experiencing loss from this vicious fire, the threat of which we live with constantly, which may seem crazy to some but we do so because living in our beautiful, rural area makes it worthwhile. It's never the structures that create a community — it's the people.

And if the people of Santa Margarita have taught me anything it's that, once the smoke has cleared, literally and figuratively, it's a time to reach out and rebuild.

"We've done it before, and will need to do it together again, and it will make our community even closer and stronger. Endless thanks to Cal Fire and the Sheriff's Office. I know you guys are fighting the good fight to keep us safe. So very relieved no one has been hurt."

PLACERITA FIRE

Los Angeles County

780 acres

95% contained

The Placerita fire started Sunday afternoon when a motorist crashed into a tree, according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department .

The blaze was expected to be fully contained by the end of Wednesday, officials said.

In its first hours over the weekend, the fire had knocked out power and triggered mandatory evacuations for dozens of residents after it jumped a freeway and sent up a towering plume of gray smoke visible for miles.

Laura Amara, a 48-year-old secretary, was hosting a baby shower at her house on Running Horse Road when the fire began.

"It started with my girlfriend having me come to the backyard where she saw a little puff of flames come up, and I saw this bigger ball of fire all of a sudden kind of explode," she told a reporter Monday.

Amara went back and told her 40 guests the news. "Um, we're all leaving," she said.

"I was worried about my house, but I've been through this many times," she said. "You live in Southern California, you live in dry conditions; just like earthquakes, you get fire too. But when it burns, I want everyone out of the house and to be safe, so that's my concern. Especially with a very pregnant daughter, it was just like, 'Go go go,' and our blood pressures were skyrocketing."

At Golden Oak Ranch, an 890-acre filming location constructed by Disney and ABC Studios, the fire burned a structure that had been used as a prop house, said L.A. County Sheriff's Department spokesman Christopher Craft.

U.S. Forest Service firefighters stopped the blaze from burning other structures in the faux business district and suburban street used for filming movies and television shows.

BURBANK FIRE

Verdugo Mountains

10 acres

80% contained

The Burbank fire started Wednesday afternoon; a cause has not been determined.

It was expected to be fully contained by the end of Wednesday, officials said.

The fast-moving fire prompted mandatory evacuations as it burned dangerously close to homes in the Verdugo Mountains, according to the Burbank Fire Department. The fire was reported near the 1000 block of Hamline Place just before 3 p.m., according to the Los Angeles Fire Department, which was assisting Burbank fire crews.

Burbank police ordered evacuations of all homes on Viewcrest Drive and Howard Court. Irving Drive was closed east of Kenneth Road, and Joaquin Drive was closed at Haven Way.

Speaking to NBC4 News, Burbank Police Sgt. Derek Green said officers were going door-to-door asking people to evacuate. Authorities initially called for voluntary evacuations and quickly changed those to mandatory orders. "It was a fast-moving fire," he said. "This is a very dry area."

Authorities were concerned because houses "butt right up to the hillside," he said.

FIRES STATEWIDE

Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service list seven other active fires burning in the state from San Diego County to Fresno County, the two largest of which were nearly contained Wednesday at about 1,500 acres apiece.

About 2,300 wildfires on state and federal land have burned 25,000 acres so far in 2017, according to government statistics.

Times staff writers Hailey Branson-Potts, Javier Panzar, Sonaiya Kelley and Matt Hamilton contributed to this report.

Proposed delta tunnel project gets green light

Controversial plan, in the works for years, would change the way Northern California water is sent south.



A BOAT navigates Whiskey Slough in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the hub of California's waterworks. Delta growers strongly oppose the tunnel project. (Katie Falkenberg Los Angeles Times)

**By Bettina Boxall
LA Times 6/28/2017**

Federal fishery agencies Monday pushed forward a controversial water project that would change the way Northern California supplies are sent to the Southland.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service concluded that the construction of new diversion points on the Sacramento River and two massive water tunnels would not jeopardize the existence of endangered species in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which is the hub of California's waterworks.

The release of the documents marks a major — but by no means final — step in the long, twisting path of the proposal, which has been in the planning stages for more than a decade.

Called biological opinions, the reviews analyze the project's likely effects on endangered and threatened species, including the vanishing delta smelt, winter-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead.

The analysis will shape operating rules for the diversions — and thus how much water the tunnels carry to the big delta pumps that supply San Joaquin Valley growers and Southland cities.

The agencies that depend on delta water will scrutinize every line of the opinions before they decide whether to fully commit to funding the project, which is expected to cost \$17 billion.

The question for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Westlands Water District and others will be whether the tunnels stabilize their delta water deliveries enough to justify the cost.

If they decide it doesn't and withdraw their support, the proposal will die. Though Monday's news was good for them, their reactions were restricted to offering thanks that another planning milestone had been reached.

Even if the districts give thumbs up, the tunnels still need several state and federal permits before construction can begin. And opponents are expected to challenge approvals in court, which could stall the project for years.

"The science in this decision was cherry-picked and not representative of the true scope of harm to endangered species who depend on a healthy San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary for their survival," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of Restore the Delta, an anti-tunnel group. "We believe the court will overturn this."

Delta growers vehemently oppose the tunnels, which would require years of disruptive construction in their backyards and would suck up good-quality fresh water before it reaches their irrigation ditches.

Environmentalists argue the tunnels will inevitably be used to send more water south, further depleting flows vital to the delta's faltering ecosystem.

"The system today is not adequately protective, and now we're approving something that makes things worse. It's a real head-scratcher," said Doug Obegi, a staff attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group that has successfully challenged previous biological opinions on delta water exports.

"It sure seems like politics is trumping science in the delta again," he said.

Dubbed the California WaterFix by the state, the proposal calls for construction of three new diversion points on the Sacramento River in the north delta, along with two massive

underground tunnels that would carry water 35 miles to existing government pumping plants in the south delta.

The powerful pumps now draw entirely from the south delta, causing delta channels to flow backward and pulling imperiled native fish to their deaths. That triggers endangered species protections that limit pumping, cutting delta deliveries.

By reducing withdrawals from the south delta, the new diversion points would lessen the reverse flows and — backers hope — loosen the pumping restrictions.

In draft reviews, federal biologists were consistently skeptical of the proposal. They warned that taking large amounts of fresh water from the north delta would create a new set of problems for migrating Chinook salmon and delta smelt, a tiny fish that is found no place else in the world.

The Fish and Wildlife Service found that construction and operation of the river intakes and twin tunnels would destroy smelt habitat that will become increasingly important as climate change and sea-level rise alter delta conditions.

The National Marine Fisheries Service concluded that as far as winter-run Chinook salmon are concerned, the new diversion would change river flow patterns and temperatures for the worse, hurting overall survival of the endangered species.

In the final opinions released Monday, the agencies conceded that project construction and operation would adversely affect imperiled species — but not to the point of jeopardizing their existence or destroying crucial habitat. The agencies also said planned habitat restoration programs would offset the tunnel effects.

Officials also noted that a separate environmental review is now underway of State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project operations that will include the tunnels — and could result in further restrictions.

Replumbing the delta

Under a proposal to replumb the hub of California's waterworks, a new diversion point on the Sacramento River would feed two 35-mile-long tunnels connected to existing government pumping plants.



Sources: California Natural Resources Agency, Mapbox, OpenStreetMap

Los Angeles Times

Huge water tunnel plan wins first approval

Crucial step in reworking delivery system in state

ELLEN KNICKMEYER AND SCOTT SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 6/27/2017

SAN FRANCISCO - U.S. wildlife officials gave crucial first approval Monday to California Gov. Jerry Brown's decades-old ambitions to build two massive tunnels that would re-engineer the water system in the nation's most populous state.

The National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said the \$16 billion project likely will not endanger more than a dozen federally protected species in the largest fresh-water estuary on the West Coast.

The project "is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any of these species, and is not likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat," Paul Souza, a regional director of the wildlife service, said in a letter.

The decision is the first in a series of federal and state rulings that will determine the fate of the twin 35-mile (55-kilometer) tunnels, California's biggest water project in decades that is expected to take more than 10 years to complete.

The project would suck part of the Sacramento River into two four-storyhigh tunnels running below the river's delta with the San Joaquin River.

Supporters say it would ensure a reliable water supply for cities, farms and tens of millions of residents, most of them in Southern and central California.

Jeffrey Kightlinger, general manager of Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which is leading the push to build the tunnels, called Monday's decision an important milestone. "For too long California's water supplies have been at risk and subject to cutbacks," he said.

Opponents say the project would speed the demise of some species of salmon and other native wildlife, already struggling after decades of heavy state reliance on water from the delta.

"The science in this decision was cherry-picked and not representative of the true scope of harm to endangered species who depend on a healthy San Francisco Bay-Delta," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of Restore the Delta, a group that represents farmers and residents in the system.

The U.S. agencies had earlier acknowledged that the tunnels would further harm California's Delta smelt — a once abundant fish species that's now nearly extinct — and winter-run Chinook salmon, another endangered native fish.

A group of water agencies in the Central Valley Project, the state's largest water supplier, asked the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation earlier this month to delay its own ruling on the project until the water agencies get assurances it won't

t cost them money or cut their own water supplies. The agency has not publicly responded.

The project's chances of federal approval may have received a boost from the election of President Donald Trump, who has said he backs big infrastructure projects and more water for central California farmers.

Brown is the project's most vocal backer, saying the tunnels would allow the state to reduce its dependence on the giant mechanical pumps that now draw water from the delta.

Replica used in Oroville Dam repairs

BRADY MCCOMBS ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 6/27/2017

LOGAN, Utah - Inside a cavernous northern Utah warehouse, hydraulic engineers send water rushing down a replica of a dam built out of wood, concrete and steel — trying to pinpoint what repairs will work best at the tallest dam in the U.S for a spillway torn apart in February during heavy rains that triggered the evacuation of 200,000 people living downstream.

The sound of rushing water is deafening as Utah State University hydraulics engineering professor Michael Johnson kneels in front of the Oroville Dam replica the size of a small house to examine one of two channels that run the width of the spillway to allow air into the water to prevent bubble formations that can damage the concrete spillway of the real dam.

The new channels, called aerators, are one of the key features in the proposed \$300 million spillway reconstruction set to be completed by November — when winter rains and snow will once again increase the flow of water into the lake above the dam.

While a separate team of dam experts tries to solve the mystery of why the spillway crumbled last February, the hydrologists who built the replica are using it to guide California authorities on how they should build a new spillway so that it can withstand rushing waters.

Besides confirming that the channels to aerate water going down the spillway would ease pressure on the spillway, the Utah testing has determined that an adjustment to a curve about halfway down the spillway would only slightly improve its effectiveness. The idea was to make the curve more gradual near a steep part of the spillway where it caved in and left a gaping hole the size of a football field in the concrete chute.

Though computer modeling is being used extensively to plan the spillway repairs, California officials and the hydrologists say high tech testing is no replacement for dam replica research. Johnson's team has a \$277,000 contract for the work and will issue its final report in the early fall.

Water flow patterns, pooling and waves can be different than computer models predict, said Ted Craddock of California's Department of Water Resources.

"This is an important validation process," Craddock said. "Water behaves very similar at a smaller scale as a larger scale."

Physical models to test proposed dams and dam repairs are necessary because "the flow of water is very complex and momentum is transferred at the molecular level," Johnson said.

"We haven't got enough computer power to model that many molecules at once," he said.

Each simulation of the 100-foot long replica that took 40 days to build begins when a crew member slowly opens a large steering wheel like valve that sends water screaming down a chute modeled after the spillway and crashing into blocks that disperse it and send it in waves to a replica of the river. Johnson almost has to shout for his team to hear him above the noise of the water mimicking a flood.

The hydrologists calculate the velocity of the water, track how much air is being absorbed in the water and document what they see in weekly reports to California authorities.

To help with the design, the separate team investigating the spillway failure sent California water officials and Utah hydrologists a list of factors they've found that could have contributed to the failure — many focusing on the condition of the spillway's concrete, slab joints and foundation. But no one factor has been discovered yet to determine how the failure happened, said John France, a dam engineering consultant leading the California investigation.

Dam experts say one of the most unsettling aspects of the events is that it occurred without warning after decades of maintenance and inspection reports showing no clues of the pending collapse.

California state officials have pointed to the torrents of runoff pouring into the dam at the time of the crisis. But the amount of water streaming down the two flood-release spillways when they began to collapse was relatively small.

The average age of the nearly 91,000 dams in the United States is 56-years-old, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, and 2,170 of the taller dams are structurally deficient in one way or the other, according to the industry group.

So the research in Utah may help improve dam safety elsewhere.



01/17/2014 10:10:10

In this June 16 photo, water flows from a replica of the Oroville Dam spillway at Utah State University's Water Research Laboratory, in Logan, Utah. California water officials are relying on key hydrology tests being performed on the replica of the spillway to pinpoint what repairs will work best at the tallest dam in the U.S for a spillway that was torn apart in February. RICK BOWMER/AP

“Water behaves very similar at a smaller scale as a larger scale.”

TED CRADDOCK

CALIFORNIA'S DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Rising Kings River forces evacuation of 90 homes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ventura County Star 6/27/2017

FRESNO - Authorities say 90 homes remain under mandatory evacuation orders following levee breaches along a river in California, the result of the state's huge springtime snowpack melting in the summer heat.

The Tulare County Sheriff's Office posted aerial photos Sunday showing several submerged houses at the Kings River Golf and Country Club. Deputies went door to door asking residents to leave after a 15-foot-wide breach opened along the river Friday.

A total of 300 people had to evacuate, and floodwaters have damaged seven structures and 18 RVs in the area east of Kingsburg, the Fresno Bee reported. Crews are bringing in sandbags to fill the breaches.

The Kings River began to flood Wednesday about 25 miles north of Fresno as temperatures soared, melting snow in the Sierra Nevada and sending it downstream.

"It was like a war zone out here," country club resident Doreen Dalbey told the Bee. "At one point it (the water) got scary high. I thought the whole house would flood. We thought the water was going a different direction but it started making its way to us. I knew when I saw the water filling up a sand trap and how fast it filled up that we were in trouble and we need to run."

In May, state water managers said California's springtime snowpack was nearly double its normal

levels following five years of historic drought, including two of the driest in the state's recorded history.



TULARE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE VIA AP

This photo released by the Tulare County Sheriff's Office on Monday shows flooding from the Kings River at the Kings River Golf and Country Club in Kingsburg.

TULARE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE VIA AP

Evacuations are ordered in Central Valley

Sierra snowmelt causes Kings River to flood, leaving seven homes damaged.



FLOODING near Kingsburg, Calif., led to a mandatory evacuation of about 90 homes late Friday. (Eric Paul Zamora Fresno Bee)

**By Doug Smith
LA Times 6/25/2017**

A surging Sierra Nevada snowmelt caused the Kings River to overflow near the Central Valley town of Kingsburg on Friday night, forcing mandatory evacuations.

Tulare County sheriff's deputies and firefighters went door to door starting just before midnight to order residents out of about 90 homes near the Kings River Golf and Country Club, said Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Teresa Douglass.

Release of water from Pine Flat Dam caused the river to breach Friday afternoon. The flooding caused damage to seven homes and 18 recreational vehicles, Douglass said.

The Sheriff's Department received a call for assistance from the golf course between 4 and 5 p.m., Douglass said. Sandbags were laid to protect structures. Portions of the course were inundated up to 10 feet.

Residents were evacuated from the unincorporated area surrounding the golf course just north of State Highway 99 about halfway between Tulare and Fresno. Voluntary evacuations were advised in a wider area to the north and south of the golf course.

The Kings River, which runs through Fresno and Tulare counties, has been closed to all recreational use since March 21 due to potentially dangerous conditions.

The National Weather Service posted a warning early Saturday saying, “Dangerously high water flows along the Kings River will continue to threaten communities downstream of Pine Flat Dam. Locations impacted include, but are not limited to: Minkler, Reedley, Kingsburg, and Grangeville.”

The notice said high releases were expected to continue through the weekend “as Pine Flat Lake is near its storage capacity due to ongoing snowmelt.”

Tyler Stalker, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said the water level in the dam has been rising for several days as warm weather increased snowmelt. The level is nearing the dam’s authorized maximum. “We estimate it will hit 100% tomorrow morning,” Stalker said. At that point, there would still be some reserve capacity, he said, adding, “We’re not really concerned.”

To prevent exceeding the limit, though, releases from the dam were increased over the past two weeks. The rate reached 14,900 cubic feet per second on Thursday, exceeding the capacity of the river in the flatlands.

The flow was reduced to 14,200 cubic feet per second Saturday, Stalker said, partly to prevent further downstream flooding but also because flow into the dam is expected to subside. “At this point forecasts are indicating snowmelt is decreasing,” Stalker said. “We expect that today and tomorrow.” Douglass said it would take hours before the reductions affected the flow in the Kingsburg area, about 25 miles to the southwest.

KFSN-TV in Fresno reported Thursday that water is also stressing levees downstream.



BEFORE & AFTER

Drought-tolerant, but a bit formal



April 2017 | The front yard in the spring Following record winter rain in Southern California, the garden is alive with a variety of blooms, shapes and textures. ()



September 2014 | The front yard beforeThe 1926 Mediterranean home was bound by a traditional — and thirsty — lawn. The Sanoffs stopped watering the lawn and let it die over four months. They skipped weed killer and had their gardener dig up the dead lawn, along with 6 inches of soil before installing the new plants. (Photographs by Linda Sanoff)



September 2014 | The parkway before Linda Sarnoff let her lawn die off and removed it, she knew she wanted to replace it with a drought-tolerant alternative that would complement her Mediterranean home in Hancock Park. ()



February 2015 | The parkway in transitionThe South African ground cover *Dymondia margaretae* (silver carpet) begins to fill in on the parking strip. ()

By Lisa Boone
LA Times 6/24/2017

“The transformation was all about water,” Sanoff said. “It’s a precious resource. We would have done this even without the rebate because it was the right thing to do.”

The couple began by replacing the turf on their parking strip with the South African ground cover *Dymondia margaretae*. When the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began offering turf removal rebates, it gave them extra motivation to keep going.

To help them visualize the new garden, Kirchmann took a picture of the house and covered it with a sheet of paper. On it, he drew in all of the plants so the couple could visualize their new garden.

To their delight, it grew in just as he illustrated.

Kirchmann kept the agapanthus, trumpet vine and roses because they were well established and planted drought-tolerant shrubs, perennials and succulents — lavender, rock roses, lantana and iris among them.

He also added a decomposed granite walkway to allow access for the trash cans and installed a drip irrigation system.

Sanoff says she is pleased with the results and the 20% savings on their water consumption.

Now when neighbors walk by and comment on their landscape, she offers them encouragement. "I tell them 'you can do this too,' " she said.

The couple removed the parkway in February 2015, stopped watering the front lawn in June and planted the new yard in November.

They received a turf rebate of \$3,500 and invested \$9,000 more.

See how the front yard evolved over time and what it looks like today:

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Want to reproduce these results?

Go online for a list of the plants Linda and Gerry Sanoff chose for their drought-tolerant landscape and a more detailed timeline of their project. Among the new plants pictured at right are: rock roses, *Echeveria elegans*, tall *Euphorbia wulfenii*, pyramid-shaped juniper "Medora," white trailing lantana, English lavender and walking Iris.



LINDA SANOFF

Also: If you've given your yard a makeover, we want to see it, and may feature it in an upcoming edition of the Saturday section. Please send before and after pictures to home@latimes.com, and include a daytime contact number.

You wouldn't let this happen, would you?



Then don't let this happen!



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