

NEWS CLIPS

Published February 9, 2018



**Resource Conservation and Public
Outreach**

Organized by date

State shrinks delta tunnel plan to one State officials downsize Delta tunnel plan to 1

Downsizing of project stems from shortfall in funding commitments by agricultural and urban water districts.



WATERFIX had been pitched as the key to sending more water south to San Joaquin Valley agribusiness and Southland cities. Above, the American River, left, meets the Sacramento River northeast of the delta. (Al Seib Los Angeles Times)

By Bettina Boxall
LA Times 2/08/2018

State officials Wednesday said they will press ahead with a smaller version of a long-planned water delivery project, initially building one, instead of two, massive tunnels in the heart of California's vast waterworks.

The decision to downsize California WaterFix boils down to money. The urban and agricultural water districts that are supposed to pay for the multibillion dollar project have only committed to enough funding for one water tunnel that would extend 35 miles under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The reduction is another setback for a decade-old proposal that was originally pitched as a grand fix for the ecologically failing delta and the key to sending more water south to San Joaquin Valley agribusiness and Southern California cities.

Questions about WaterFix's impact on the delta environment, opposition by delta interests and funding shortfalls have steadily whittled down the project's ambitions and scope. A major habitat restoration program was dropped. The construction footprint was reduced. And now, instead of a \$17-billion, two-tunnel project, the state is planning to move ahead with one tunnel that would cost \$10.7 billion.

The changes are likely to add more delays to WaterFix. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and other agencies that approved funding for the two-tunnel plan have to decide if a scaled-back version will deliver enough water to maintain the project's appeal.

"Metropolitan recognizes that a staged approach to California WaterFix reflects the project's economic realities at this time," Metropolitan general manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said in a statement. "Metropolitan continues to explore pathways that align cost and benefits and will work with our partners on a financing agreement. But the final decision regarding participation in the staged project will ultimately be made by our board of directors."

The Department of Water Resources said it would take until October to complete a supplemental environmental review of the modified plans.

And shrinking the project won't quiet criticism that big tunnel diversions on the Sacramento River will hurt migrating salmon and worsen water quality in the delta.

"The science is clear: We need to increase [delta] outflow and reduce diversions," said Doug Obegi, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group.

The project also has yet to finish the permitting process, which could throw still more hurdles in its path.

The tunnel proposal is the latest attempt to halt the delta's steep environmental decline while continuing major water exports that have helped drive that decline. The project's many stumbles illustrate how difficult — if not impossible — it is to attain that goal.

In a memo to water contractors, state officials Wednesday said the ultimate scope of WaterFix depended on the participation of local agencies — construction could begin on a second tunnel if additional funding materialized. "Being prepared and having the option of a staged implementation of WaterFix is prudent, fiscally responsible and meets the needs of the public water agencies funding the project," wrote DWR Director Karla Nemeth.

Even a smaller WaterFix would involve a mammoth construction job. Two new intakes, with a total capacity of 6,000 cubic feet per second, would be built on the Sacramento

River in the north delta near Courtland. The tunnel — taller than a three-story building and buried as much as 150 feet underground — would feed existing government pumping plants in the south delta.

Those pumping operations are so powerful that they have altered delta hydrology, caused delta channels to flow backward and pushed imperiled native fish closer to extinction — triggering endangered species protections that at times restrict southbound water exports.

WaterFix is intended to diminish the environmental impacts of the pumping — heading off further export restrictions. But opponents argue that the new river diversions will create another set of environmental problems, while years of construction will disrupt one of California's most tranquil farming regions.

The original funding plan called for the largely urban water agencies supplied by the State Water Project to pay for 55% of the tunnels, while the largely agricultural customers of the federal Central Valley Project paid for the remaining 45%.

But the Central Valley Project districts balked at the costs, saying their growers couldn't afford the tunnel water. That left Metropolitan and other State Water Project contractors holding the bill — forcing the change to a smaller and less expensive design.

"It's clear from the memo that Phase 2 probably won't be built," Obegi said.

Brown scales back water tunnel plans

Staff and wire reports
Ventura County Star 2/08/2018

Gov. Jerry Brown's administration scaled back the latest version of his four-decade effort to redo California's north-south water system Wednesday, cutting plans to build giant water tunnels from two to one.

Reducing the number of tunnels — at least for now — would help California's quest to line up enough funding and ease environmental concerns over tapping directly into the state's largest river, officials said.

Supporters also hope the trimmed-down project will have a better chance of winning approval before the 79-year-old governor leaves office in January. The single tunnel still would be California's biggest water project in decades.

The project would pipe water from Northern California's Sacramento River through a four-story-high tunnel dozens of miles long. Los Angeles' giant Metropolitan Water District has been the steadiest long-term supporter of both one tunnel or two, saying they would help secure water for its millions of urban customers.

Metropolitan is the ultimate source of tap water for 75 percent of Ventura County residents.

The new plan marks the latest in Brown's lengthy effort to redo the water system left by his father, the late Gov. Pat Brown.

The original project built by the late Brown has giant pumps that at times changed the direction of the flow of the largest estuary on the West Coast. The outdated mechanics and overall water withdrawals for humans hastened the decline of California's chinook salmon and other native species, environmental groups say.

Jerry Brown has sought to overhaul the state water project since his first terms in office.

Californians in 1982 voted down Brown's proposal for a giant canal, rather than tunnels.

Supporters of the tunnels say the new project would help the environment. Opponents fear the project — whether one tunnel or two — could take too much fresh water from the vital waterway.

California water districts had balked at the \$16 billion cost of the two tunnels, stalling that version by late last year.

Karla Nemeth, head of the state Department of Water Resources, wrote local water agencies Wednesday that the state would still proceed with a second tunnel if the money is found.

The state put the cost of the single tunnel at \$10.7 billion, all to be paid by water districts that use the supply.

Environmental groups alleged that the two-tunnel plan survives in name only, so the state can avoid seeking new permits and approvals on what environmental groups insist is basically a new, one-tunnel project.

'The water agency is stretching to find ways to keep an unpopular and illconceived project alive,' said Kathryn Phillips, director of the California Sierra Club. 'It doesn't have the funding for the tunnels project it claims the state needs, so it just changes the project to fit the money it can find.'

Jennifer Pierre, general manager of a group of water contractors that gets supplies from the state water project, said two tunnels remain the goal.

Money for a solo water tunnel 'is clearly available now so that we can move forward,' Pierre said. 'We're not taking our eye off the full project.'

Several local water agencies that had refused to join the two-tunnel project, fearing it would cost too much without bringing additional water, already have expressed support in theory for one tunnel.

'It's kinder, gentler,'

Gary Kremen, a member of the biggest water board for Silicon Valley, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, said of the one-tunnel version. The district was one of the few big ones in Northern California to look hard at joining in the tunnels.

Jeffrey Kightlinger, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, issued the following written statement about building the project in stages: "Metropolitan recognizes that a staged approach to California WaterFix reflects the project's economic realities at this time. Staging the project was not the original solution that the many stakeholders were planning toward, but the status quo is simply not acceptable and we must begin building the reliability the state needs.

"By staging California WaterFix, the state can tap the critical mass and support it has to move forward with an initial phase that modernizes the water system in the Delta by designing and constructing one tunnel and two intakes. Metropolitan continues to explore pathways that align cost and benefits and will work with our partners on a financing agreement. But the final decision regarding participation in the staged project will ultimately be made by our Board of Directors."

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties, including Ventura County.

The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.

From reports by The Associated Press and the Star staff.



Water flows through an irrigation canal to crops near Lemoore. AP FILE PHOTO

How birds protect anti-flood structures

County to use raptors to help control rodents

Kathleen Wilson USA TODAY NETWORK

Ventura County Star 2/08/2018

Armed with a study showing that predatory birds protect flood-control structures from burrowing rodents, managers plan to substantially cut use of poison to guard levees and dams.

Anticoagulant rodenticides have long been viewed as a way to lower the population of California ground squirrels, which have been known to tunnel 35 feet into a levee. The anticoagulant rodenticides kill the squirrels by preventing the blood from clotting, but they also can be deadly for mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes that eat the poisoned squirrels.

The Ventura County Watershed Protection District set out to test whether birds of prey — also called raptors — could control the damage done by squirrels just as well.

In what they believe is a groundbreaking study reported in January, researchers found the raptors were much more effective than rodenticides at limiting damage by squirrels.

“It was a nice surprise,” said David Torfeh, an environmental scientist for the district.

The district installed 20-foot-tall perches that drew red-tailed hawks, which naturally hunt ground squirrels.

Deputy Director Karl Novak said the district had for years limited the use of rodenticides to dams and levees because of the secondary deaths in the other wildlife. Now district officials plan another major reduction in rodenticides based on the results of the study.

The poisonous substance is added to oats that are placed in T-shaped plastic stations. The squirrels eat the oats and ultimately die, preventing them from burrowing into the levees.

“We are in the process of removing bait stations from the dams and looking at the levees, as well,” Novak said.

Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, he said. There may be areas where raptor control won't be feasible such as levees near airports where the birds could interfere with planes, he said.

The study was conducted from April 2016 to August 2017 at two sites along a levee at the Revolon Slough, located in farmland in the Oxnard area.

Workers installed perches and nesting facilities to draw birds such as redtailed hawks, barn owls and great horned owls to a 6,000-foot-stretch of the slough. Then researchers compared the number of burrows the squirrels dug with a similar stretch of the slough where rodenticide bait was set.

They found 66 percent fewer burrows at the raptor site than in the control site where the bait had been set. In a followup, they decided to test what would happen if they removed the bait stations from the control site and installed bird perches. That was done to filter out the effect of using two different sites. Still, they found

47 percent fewer burrows.

Perches were installed mostly where a fair number of raptors were already present, Torfeh said.

“This allows them to hunt better because the perch gives them an advantageous view of the banks of the channel,” he said.

Researchers were primarily focused on seeing what would happen with squirrel burrows.

The study did not do a direct comparison for gophers. But the raptors also kept down the population of those rodents, the study suggested.

Gophers can excavate more than a ton of soil a year, Novak said.

District officials presented the results of the study to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in January. An update is planned in 12 months.

Torfeh said he had not seen any unintended environmental consequences from adding perches and nesting sites to attract the birds.

“It seems to be good for everything involved except ground squirrels and gophers because they’re hunted more,” he said.

11 attorneys general sue administration over water rule

Verena Dobnik ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 2/07/2018

NEW YORK – Eleven Democratic state attorneys general on Tuesday sued President Donald Trump’s administration over its decision to delay implementation of an Obama-era rule that would have expanded the number of wetlands and small waterways protected by the Clean Water Act.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said last week’s decision by the Republican administration to postpone implementation of the 2015 Clean Water Rule for two years is an assault on public health.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt has called the rule an overreach that could hurt farmers and ranchers.

Mining and industry groups also opposed it.

“We will fight back against this reckless rollback and the Trump administration’s continued assault on our nation’s core public health and environmental protections,” Schneiderman said in a statement.

The lawsuit was filed in New York by Schneiderman and his counterparts in California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and the District of Columbia. It seeks to stop the government from blocking implementation of the rule while considering alternatives.

The regulation was put on hold for the past two years by various court challenges that kept it from taking effect.

Schneiderman said the delay jeopardizes protections for streams that help provide drinking water to more than half of New York state residents and more than 100 million other Americans.

The attorneys general accuse the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of violating federal law. They claim the EPA does not have the authority to hold off on a regulation that “rests on a massive factual record,” according to the suit.

Rep. Nunes' hometown cares little about memo Tulare cares about water, not Russia

Businesses, residents and farmers around Tulare say they believe he can deliver jobs and water.



DAIRY COWS at Tulare High School Farm last year. Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Tulare) is from a farming family and has strong backing from farmers and growers. (Gary Coronado Los Angeles Times)

By Jazmine Ulloa
LA Times 2/07/2018

TULARE, Calif. — At Old Salles Cafe, near the northern outskirts of this deeply conservative farming city, Archie Harrison said he did not know much about his congressman, Devin Nunes, nor did he need to know more.

“If he supports Trump, I support him,” the 51-year-old truck driver said Monday over a breakfast of steak and eggs, only hours after President Trump had hailed Nunes in a tweet as a future “ Great American Hero .”

As Nunes finds himself at the center of a political firestorm in Washington over the release of his controversial memo about the Russia investigation, thousands of dollars are pouring into Democratic campaigns aiming to unseat him in the midterm election. But in the Republican’s hometown of Tulare, where partisan rifts reflect those across the country, many constituents aren’t following the battle, even as it seems to heat up .

Here some business owners and workers said they still believe Nunes can deliver on jobs. Farmers and growers tend to know him for water, not Russia.

“It’s fake — the whole Russia deal,” said John Cairns, a fifth-generation farmer who attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with Nunes and was in his fraternity. “Washington is a totally different ballgame from what we are dealing with out here. We are going to support a candidate that delivers water to local farmers.”

Nunes’ district sits in the San Joaquin Valley, spanning Tulare, Visalia and parts of Fresno. It is predominantly Latino, although less than 29% of that population is registered to vote, and agriculture is a major economic driver and No. 1 employer. In Tulare, a city of nearly 63,000, farmers like to point out that the region feeds the world, with Tulare, Fresno and Kern counties typically running among the top three global agricultural producers for cotton, almonds, wine grapes and walnuts.

The district is home to nearly half a million cows, and 50% of the world’s supply of raisins is produced within a 60-mile radius of Fresno.

Growers see Nunes, whose family has been farming in the community for generations, as a longtime vocal advocate for their interests. They say his prior legislation failed only because of previous presidents.

Roger Isom, president of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Assn., said Nunes in his 14 years in Congress has helped bring attention to the water crisis. They cited in particular East Porterville, an unincorporated area of Tulare County, where hundreds of wells went dry and people were forced to flush toilets with buckets of dirty water during the recent years-long drought. The congressman’s efforts led to the building of a communal shower and to the temporary opening of dams to allow water to flow to the area.

“Devin fought to bring this to the light,” Isom said. “He has pushed the conversation, and there is the impact in my community.”

Now Isom and other growers are hoping Nunes helps push for more deregulation of the farming industry, funds for research and the creation of more dams, which they say requires state and federal dollars.

They also want to see federal restrictions repealed protecting smelt, an endangered fish species not indigenous to the Central Valley. And they are well aware that they are at odds with the rest of California, or as one grower put it, “people on the other side of the grapevine.”

“You go to San Francisco, and people think we are trying to kill the environment,” Cairns said at his corner produce store off All American City Highway. “But we are just trying to make a living and put food on tables.”

That is why their faith in Nunes endures, they say, though some agree his latest political battles in Washington are a distraction from the issues germane to their daily lives.

“Our eyes are on the more important issue right now: a federal project that gets us water,” Isom said. “Am I going to keep up with everything [the president] tweets? I honestly don’t have the time.”

Nunes, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, became a focus for Democrats after he crafted and released a four-page memo last week that alleges senior FBI and Justice Department officials relied on questionable and politically motivated sources to justify surveillance of Trump’s presidential campaign. Democrats counter that Nunes cherry-picked information, and on Monday they won the committee’s approval to release their rebuttal memo .

In neighboring Fresno, several dozen people took to the streets Saturday to protest the release of Nunes’ document, and the opinion pages of the local newspaper, the Fresno Bee, recently dubbed him “ President Trump’s stooge .” The Bee covered the memo spat on its front page Tuesday.

Former county prosecutor Andrew Janz, a Democrat, is running an uphill battle for Nunes’ House seat in a district where registered Republican voters outnumber Democrats by 10 percentage points and Trump won with 51% of the vote in 2016. Late last year, Janz bought a highway billboard in Clovis depicting Nunes and Trump clad in diapers, with Russian President Vladimir Putin pulling them by leashes.

Over the weekend, Janz, 33, said on HBO’s “Vice News Tonight” that the billboard shows he is “not afraid to attack an eight-term incumbent.”

The Democrat said he raised \$100,000 for his campaign the day the memo was unveiled, \$150,000 the next and was on track to do the same Sunday. “By end of this quarter, we should probably have \$1 million in our bank account,” he said in a segment that played in a hotel in Tulare.

It’s unclear how influential a liberal national news show might be in the 22nd Congressional District. Residents do listen to conservative talk radio, whose hosts on this particular day spent less time discussing news in Washington than they did on perceived liberal media bias and how kneeling NFL players might be the reason that Super Bowl ratings declined.

In this quiet town, which some in the area see as a world apart even from the more populated Fresno, how residents felt about Trump tended to dictate how they felt about Nunes — and many preferred to avoid the toxic subject altogether.

One downtown restaurant owner said he has noticed a deep partisan divide among his clients, though residents with varying political views complain it is difficult to get to know Nunes, who they said has not hosted a town hall.

Others wondered why he had not done more to help the so-called Dreamers brought to the country illegally as children.

“I thought he was going to do what he advertised,” said Gilda Salas, 53, a housekeeper who voted for him last election. “I thought he was going to worry about education and illegal immigration.”

At Flores Nidia on South K Street, Maria Ortega had arranged rows and rows of stuffed white bears and red balloons for Valentine’s Day. Ortega, 67, said Nunes should be worried about aligning himself with someone like Trump, whose immigration rhetoric she said is scaring off employees and clients alike and hurting small businesses.

“A good politician is well known to everyone in their hometown, but I know very little else about him,” she said.

Communities still face threats from mud flows

Cheri Carlson USA TODAY NETWORK
Ventura County Star 2/06/2018

Despite dry, hot days and worsening drought conditions, local communities continue to face threats of debris and mud flows and could for several years.

That's the message authorities want to get across to the public, and agencies will hold a series of meetings next week to talk to residents about potential threats and how they can prepare.

The Thomas Fire burned more than 440 square miles in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, leaving scorched hillsides vulnerable to flash floods and debris flows.

In January, the first storm in months slammed steep, burned hills above Montecito, triggering massive debris flows. Hundreds of homes were destroyed or damaged, 21 people were killed and two are still missing.

Ventura County escaped the worst of that storm, but February typically is one of the rainiest months of the year.

"We're in what is traditionally our wettest part of the season," said Kevin McGowan, who manages the Ventura County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services.

Even one storm could cause major problems, depending on how quickly the rain falls, he said.

After a fire, a lot more rain will run off the hills instead of soaking in the ground. That means more water filling channels and drains, along with the ash, burned brush and trees.

Over the past several weeks, crews have cleared channels and installed debris racks to trap branches and rocks before they reach drains.

State, federal and county agencies also collected data to look at where debris flows could be a problem.

They looked at factors from the steepness of a slope to how much vegetation was left after the fire. Then, they used models to see where mud would flow and what areas were likely to clog and flood if that happens.

Agencies also worked together to come up with triggers for evacuations, officials said.

Information about what they analyzed and what they came up with will be shared at the meetings.

With that information, residents will be able to look at the real-time rain information during a storm and know what that means for their area, said Jeff Pratt, the county's public works director.

They will learn more about how agencies track storms, when to be concerned and when not to be concerned, he said.

The large footprint of the Thomas Fire was broken down into 10 areas based on their geographic location and various other factors. Residents were urged to attend the meeting for their zone.

Here are three meetings scheduled for next week. Spanish-language translators and sign language interpreters will be available at all of the meetings, county officials said.

■ Feb. 12: A meeting is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. at Fire Station 25, 5674 W. Pacific Coast Highway, for residents along the county's north coast and La Conchita.

■ Feb. 13: A meeting is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. in the auditorium at Glenn City school, 141 S. Steckel Drive in Santa Paula, for residents of the Santa Clara River valley.

■ Feb. 17: Three meetings are scheduled at the Oak View Community Center, 18 Valley Road in Oak View – 9 to 10:30 a.m. for residents of Upper Ojai, Casitas Pass and Matilija; 1 to 2:30 p.m. for residents in areas along the Highway 33 corridor, Meiners Oaks, Oak View and the city of Ojai; and 5 to 6:30 p.m. for residents in the areas of Casitas Vista, Nye Road and Creek Road.



Mud covered roads and homes in the wake of fatal debris flows in Montecito last month. JUAN CARLO/THE STAR

In dead of winter, California baking Heat breaks records for winters in California

Unseasonably warm, dry temperatures set records statewide. Clear skies could last until next weekend.



A SURFER WALKS through Redondo Beach on Sunday. Record-breaking heat swept the Southland and other regions over the weekend. Temperatures reached a high of 89 in Woodland Hills and 77 in Palmdale. (Christina House Los Angeles Times) By Rong-Gong Lin

Il and Alene Tchekmedyan
LA Times 2/05/2018

LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — Under a baking sun, Russell Neches peeled off his long-sleeved base layer to hit the ski slopes at Royal Gorge Cross Country Resort near Lake Tahoe.

Early February should be the dead of California's winter, yet Neches was skiing in — and sweating through — his T-shirt.

“As soon as there was sun, it was unbearably hot,” said the 37-year-old Oakland resident.

Unseasonably warm and dry temperatures blanketed California over the weekend, shattering records across the state and bringing clear blue skies that were expected to linger through next weekend.

At the resorts near Lake Tahoe, the weather was so warm — 12 to 18 degrees above average — that the snow was melting. Some would-be skiers opted to go hiking instead.

It was a dramatic change from this time last year, when Tahoe had so much snow that figuring out where to put it all was a challenge.

In Northern California, residents in the famously foggy City by the Bay traded their winter coats and sweaters for T-shirts and shorts over the weekend.

The high temperature in San Francisco was 74 on Saturday and Sunday, setting new records for both days.

About 100 miles south, Salinas also had two consecutive days of record-breaking heat, reaching 81 on Saturday and 80 on Sunday.

Elsewhere around the Bay Area, new records were set Saturday at Oakland International Airport, with 76 degrees; in Santa Rosa, 76; and in San Jose, 78.

Up in Sonoma County's wine country, temperatures in Healdsburg rose to 80 degrees Saturday. That broke a record of 75 set 112 years ago, way back in 1906.

The city of Ukiah in Mendocino County hit a high of 78 Sunday. It was the fourth consecutive day of tying or breaking the daily temperature record.

Half Moon Bay also reached 78 degrees Sunday, breaking a record for the day and tying the record-high temperature for the month of February.

In downtown Los Angeles, where February is typically the wettest month of the year, temperatures Sunday peaked at 81 degrees. (That was still 10 degrees cooler than the record set in 1995, when it was 91 degrees on Feb. 4.)

Sandberg reached 82 degrees, breaking a daily record of 74 set in 2015 and a monthly record of 78 set on Feb. 13, 2014.

Record-breaking heat also hit Woodland Hills, which reached 89 degrees, and Palmdale, which saw a high of 77.

Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA, said people have been noticing the rising temperatures because the warmth has been so extreme. One of the reasons, he said, is

a persistent pattern of West Coast ridging: an area of high atmospheric pressure that brings mild weather.

“This year it’s been more pronounced in Southern California, but increasingly it’s extended farther north,” he said.

The warm, dry weather can be traced in part to the phenomenon known as La Niña, in which there are colder-than-average sea surface temperatures in the tropical east Pacific Ocean, Swain said. The warming in the western tropical Pacific, along with the loss of Arctic sea ice, are also factors, he said.

Experts expect extreme weather to become the norm in the state as the climate changes and global temperatures rise.

“At least in terms of warmth, we know this is the direction things are heading ... hotter summers and more warm temperatures in the winter that prevent Sierra Nevada snowfall or snow accumulation,” Swain said.

“The key thing to keep in mind, though: The evidence does not suggest that California is heading in a permanently drier direction,” he added. “We saw just last winter, even in a dry decade, we can have a really wet year that causes the opposite issue.”

The weather is expected to cool down this week, but it will still be warm, with above-average temperatures forecast through the weekend.

“It’s going to be up a handful of degrees, down a handful of degrees, not ever really getting cold,” said Kathy Hoxsie, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Oxnard.

Hoxsie said in about 10 days, there’s a chance the winter weather pattern will start breaking down, which could mean a chance of rain.

Her colleagues farther south seemed less optimistic.

“Supposedly there’s going to be 6 more weeks of winter,” the National Weather Service in San Diego posted on its Facebook page. “I guess this means 6 more weeks of sunny, warm, and dry conditions?”

Lin reported from Lake Tahoe and Tchekmedyian from Los Angeles.



A SHAFT OF sunlight streaks through Pershing Square on Sunday, when the weather in downtown Los Angeles peaked at 81 degrees. (Robert Gauthier Los Angeles Times)

Salmon farmer loses lease in Pacific

Washington State ends contract at site where a pen collapse in 2017 let loose thousands of nonnative fish.

Associated press
LA Times 2/05/2018

SEATTLE — Washington state officials Sunday canceled a lease with Cooke Aquaculture Pacific at the site where net pens holding farmed Atlantic salmon collapsed last summer, releasing thousands of nonnative fish into Puget Sound.

The decision came days after a multi-agency state investigation found the Canada-based company negligent for failing to adequately clean its nets, saying that directly contributed to the net-pen failure in August.

The report released Tuesday said the nets failed because they were excessively laden with mussels and other marine organisms. That increased the drag on the nets from tidal currents and overwhelmed the mooring system.

State officials last week also accused the company of misleading them by underreporting how many fish escaped into Puget Sound on Aug. 19 and over-reporting how many fish were captured. It fined the company \$332,000 for alleged clean water law violations for releasing invasive species into Washington state waters.

“Cooke has flagrantly violated the terms of its lease at Cypress Island,” Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz said in a statement Sunday. “The company’s reckless disregard endangered the health of our waters and our people, and it will not be tolerated.”

Cooke did not immediately respond to a call and email Sunday about the lease cancellation.

Last week, the company criticized the state’s investigation as incomplete and inaccurate. Cooke disputed the findings, including its accounting of fish. It said that company employees were under state supervision when the recovered fish were counted and that the state relied on wrong estimates about average fish weight.

This is the second Cooke lease that Franz has canceled in two months. Franz oversees the state Department of Natural Resources, which manages and leases state-owned waters. All of Cooke’s marine-farmed salmon operations hold state leases.

In December, Franz ended the state’s lease with Cooke at its marine aquaculture in Port Angeles, saying the company violated the terms of its lease by not maintaining the

facility in a safe condition. Cooke has challenged that decision in Clallam County Superior Court.

Cooke is the largest U.S. producer of farmed Atlantic salmon. Before the two lease cancellations, the company operated eight commercial salmon net pens at four locations. The company bought the facilities from Icicle Acquisition Subsidiary in 2016.

Dam plans score low in bid for bond funds Proposed water storage projects hit a bump

Backers say they'll revisit proposals in competition for Proposition 1 money.



HORSES run through the valley that would be inundated by the proposed Sites Reservoir near Maxwell, Calif. Environmentalists say the project will have a tough time overcoming the concerns of state wildlife officials.

By Bettina Boxall
LA Times 2/05/2018

Backers of new dams and other water storage projects in California slammed into a roadblock Friday when their proposals scored badly in the first round of competition for a pot of state bond money.

Whether the roadblock is temporary or permanent remains to be seen. But the low scores for 11 different proposals are a reminder that the free flow of government money for big water projects is a thing of the past.

Whether the projects were big or little, or involved new reservoirs or groundwater facilities, none of them fully met the first set of funding criteria spelled out by the California Water Commission. The commission is tasked with allocating the \$2.7 billion earmarked for storage projects in Proposition 1, the 2014 state water bond that set specific requirements on how those funds can be spent.

The state can pay for no more than half of a project's total cost. The state money can be used only to underwrite a project's public benefits, such as recreation, flood control and ecosystem improvements.

And half of the state share has to pay for ecosystem improvements in the watershed of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the troubled center of California's water system.

The state agencies that reviewed the applications for the commission concluded that backers in many cases had not documented their claims of public benefits or had failed to show their project would provide the necessary ecosystem improvements.

Backers of the proposed Temperance Flat Dam, which would rise on the upper San Joaquin River above Friant Dam, applied for \$1 billion. The commission's initial verdict: zero funding.

Proponents of the Sites Reservoir, which would store water diverted from the Sacramento River in Northern California, fared somewhat better. The commission said they were eligible for \$662 million. That was still \$1 billion less than they asked for.

Commission staff stressed that the public benefit scores could go up after applicants provide them with more information in coming weeks. Moreover, several other factors will figure into a project's final score, which determines funding eligibility.

"We're early in the process. No applicant is being removed now," commission spokesman Chris Orrock said. The commission expects to make final decisions in July.

Project proponents said they were confident they can boost their scores.

"All the applicants figure we can do better than what they scored us," said Jim Watson, general manager of the Sites Project Authority. "We always assumed we would have to use an appeal" to fully explain the proposal's water management plans.

Mario Santoyo, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority, likewise said that when Temperance Flat proponents go over their computer modeling with the commission staff, "we're going to turn that around completely."

Environmentalists said they expected some proposals — such as one to expand Los Vaqueros Reservoir in the Bay Area — would be able to improve their position in the funding line.

But Friant and Sites, they argued, will have a tough time overcoming the concerns of the state Fish and Wildlife Department, which concluded both projects could harm salmon.

“Commission staff deserves a lot of credit for taking a hard look at all the projects and making sure the public is only paying for public benefits,” said Rachel Zwillinger, water policy advisor for Defenders of Wildlife, an environmental group.

It’s not just dam proposals that stumbled in the commission review. So did proposals for groundwater storage facilities in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

“It’s a little discouraging that all the projects scored” low, Watson said.

Tim Quinn, executive director of the Assn. of California Water Agencies, said he was astounded at the “stark differences” between the commission’s analysis and the applicants’.

“Those projects were put together with care,” he said. “I know the value of storage. And a number of them ought to get built.”

But he acknowledged the difficulty of achieving Proposition 1’s twin goals, as outlined in the legislative language that put the measure before California voters: Fund both water supply and ecosystem improvements.

“We wanted to design and construct infrastructure in a different way, not just for water supply,” Quinn said. “It’s a hard thing to do.”

Water District Celebrates 60 Years; Honors County Fire Department Partnership

2018 is the 60th Anniversary of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD). Since 1958, the District has served the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village and the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County with safe, clean and affordable water.

Milestones like these provide the District with the opportunity for reflecting upon past accomplishments to remember where they began, the journey to where they are and to responsibly plan for a challenging future.

The last few years challenged all Californians to change both our perceptions and behavior regarding water and how we use it. With weather patterns becoming more intense and variable due to climate change, long-term water reliability is a major focus of the LVMWD.

Diversifying the District's water portfolio through innovative technologies, such as those proposed with the Pure Water Project Las Virgenes-



A fire department helicopter picks up recycled water from the reservoir behind the water district headquarters.

Triunfo, will help ensure that communities and residents will consistently have access to our shared resource.

In order to help residents and businesses become even more water-efficient, LVMWD offers residents options that will help save water and money with free water saving devices that can be picked up at the District,

free compost and recycled water pickups on Saturdays, and free home water audits.

The first recipient was the County of Los Angeles Fire Department. The District's partnership with the fire department is among the most fundamental and dates back to the formation of the District in 1958.

One of the primary functions

of the water system is to provide enough water at the right pressure to support firefighters in saving lives and property within the service area. During the Malibu Bowl Fire which destroyed over 40 homes in the Malibu Hills, Malibu Bowl, and Monte Nido areas off of Corral Canyon, LVMWD staff followed the fire department into the burned area, even before the

fires were extinguished, turning services off to the destroyed homes which helped maintain pressure and storage in the Latigo sub-system that serves this area.

The Fire Department's Air Operations unit also draws water from the District's reservoir to combat wildfire from the air when needed. The award thanks all of the women and men from the Fire Department who courageously serve our communities every day and risk their lives for each of us to ensure that we are safe.



Recognition Award: From left to right, LVMWD General Manager Dave Pedersen, Director Lee Renger, Director Jay Lewitt, Director Glen Peterson, Chief Williams, Director Len Polan, Director Charlie Caspary.