

**BAY AREA WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

January 17, 2013

Media coverage of interest between December 27, 2012 and January 7, 2013.

Media Coverage

Date: January 7, 2013
Publication: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: California water system upgrade overdue

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California water system upgrade overdue

SF Gate

Timothy Quinn

Published 5:46 pm, Monday, January 7, 2013

If you are a typical Californian, chances are you have a smartphone in your pocket and a fuel-efficient car in your driveway. You probably do your banking online, stream movies in your home and enjoy a bewildering selection of produce year-round at the supermarket.

Technology has changed our lives in a relatively short time. In sector after sector, industries have made advancements to keep pace with a constantly changing world. It's hard to imagine consumers accepting anything less.

Yet there is one major area where modernization is long overdue: our statewide water system. Despite its essential role in our economy, California's backbone water-delivery system no longer performs to today's standards. We shouldn't be satisfied with that.

It's time to retool. Major advances in air quality, for example, have been made through dramatic changes in technology used by power plants, factories and [cars](#). Huge reductions in water pollution likewise have been made through state-of-the-art treatment plants.

Our statewide water system needs a similar assist from technology. Decades-old conveyance facilities in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta are being asked to meet new environmental standards they were not designed to meet. Failure to meet that bar has negatively affected fish and water deliveries to millions of Californians.

Science has greatly improved our understanding of the problem. We know that smarter infrastructure can help by reducing impacts on species and making pumping levels more predictable for water suppliers.

Though local water managers are investing in the next generation of wise-water-use technology and solutions in their regions, we've postponed the job at the statewide level. That's a problem.

Wineries in the Livermore Valley, for example, will have a hard time producing award-winning varietals if water delivered through the delta grows increasingly unreliable.

Avocado farmers in San Diego County and cut-flower growers in Ventura will be hard-pressed to produce their crops if water from the statewide system is not reliable enough. In the Central Valley, fields of melons, pistachios and pomegranates will give way to fallowed land if water deliveries become too uncertain to grow these specialty items.

In Silicon Valley, manufacturers of computer chips and circuits know production will fizzle without reliable water from the statewide system.

All of this is at risk because our water system is outmoded and underperforming. Physical improvements are being identified now through a collaborative process known as the [Bay Delta Conservation Plan](#) that could put us on a path to retool the system for the 21st century.

Specifics are being refined, but the process merits support as state and federal agencies review alternatives and assess how the project would improve conditions for species.

When something isn't working, you fix it. If your statewide water system no longer performs, take steps to improve it. Sticking with the status quo and expecting different results makes as little sense as trying to combat air pollution without investing in clean-air technology.

It is time to step up and invest in a water system that works. Californians expect nothing less.

[Timothy Quinn](#) is the executive director of the [Association of California Water Agencies](#).

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/openforum/article/California-water-system-upgrade-overdue-4173311.php#ixzz2HWJMATUW>

Projecting warming's impact on Bay Area

SF Chronicle

James Temple

Saturday, January 5, 2013

It's now indisputable that the Earth is warming, at least for anyone who still takes thermometers at their word.

Average global temperatures have ticked up by about 0.8 degrees Celsius since 1880, and two-thirds of that increase has taken place since 1975, according to the [National Aeronautics and Space Administration](#). Nine of the 10 warmest years in that time period have occurred since the year 2000.

To be sure, the planet has experienced cooling and warming periods in the past. But the steep temperature rise in the late 20th century blew past the highs of the last 1,000 years, the period for which there are reliable data.

And more warming is on the way. A variety of studies have concluded that current rates of fossil fuel emissions could push global temperatures up by as much as 6 degrees Celsius by 2100. To put that in context: A 2007 report by the [U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) predicts that an increase of just 3.5 degrees would drive into extinction 40 to 70 percent of the species for which the impact of global warming has been studied.

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that fossil fuels are primarily to blame for the warming in recent decades. Nearly 98 percent of climate scientists actively publishing agree with that conclusion, according to a 2010 study by researchers at Stanford.

That study also found that the few researchers still unconvinced of what's known as anthropogenic climate change published far less on average in peer-reviewed climate literature, the accepted mark of scientific expertise and prominence.

Wildfires and floods

The consequences of a warming world are already making themselves known.

It's difficult to link any single season or weather event to climate change, but 2012 was a veritable case study in the patterns scientists have long warned could become the new normal. By midsummer, U.S. temperatures broke more than 40,000 daily heat records, and 2012 was almost certainly the warmest year on record. (The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) will report official December temperatures later this week.)

The resulting drought affected 80 percent of U.S. agricultural land, and the hot, dry conditions set the stage for one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent memory across the West.

In October, Superstorm Sandy, the largest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded, devastated the Eastern Seaboard, killing more than 100, knocking out power for millions and exacting an economic toll of more than \$60 billion.

Munich Re, a global reinsurance company, released a study that same month underscoring a sharp increase in "weather-related loss events" over the past three decades. Nowhere was that more true than in the United States, where costly catastrophes like thunderstorms, tornadoes, wildfires, droughts and floods have nearly quintupled during that time.

Terra incognita

Without drastic changes to fossil fuel emissions, the impacts of global warming will land on the Bay Area with a brute force that pays no regard to our relatively liberal politics, farsighted state climate regulations or fondness for hybrid vehicles.

By 2050, rising sea levels could put land around the bay equivalent in area to six San Franciscos at risk of serious flooding, including the region's airports, a stretch of Silicon Valley high-tech campuses and the homes of more than 100,000 residents, according to the [San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission](#). Sea levels could surge nearly 6 feet by 2100, putting more than \$60 billion in shoreline development in jeopardy.

The rising tides will also magnify the region's existing vulnerabilities to tsunamis and earthquakes, researchers say.

As California's temperatures climb, the Sierra snowpack that stores about a third of the state's water will dwindle. The increasing heat could also undermine the fog that feeds coastal ecosystems, including Northern California's treasured redwoods.

Land with the unique terroir necessary for the region's renowned grapes will shrink, devastating the wine and tourism sectors alike. Wild plant and animal species will migrate up hillsides and into different bodies of water, altering sensitive ecologies in complicated and unpredictable ways.

"It's terra incognita," said [Jane Long](#), a former associate director at [Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory](#) and a visiting scientist at UC Berkeley. "We don't know where we're going, but we know we're heading toward something that could be very, very dangerous."

James Temple is a [San Francisco Chronicle](#) staff writer. E-mail: jtemple@sfgate.com

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/Projecting-warming-s-impact-on-Bay-Area-4170481.php#ixzz2Hap6BBUf>

1st Sierra snowpack survey looks good

SF Chronicle

Peter Fimrite

Wednesday, January 2, 2013

The weather in the Sierra was gorgeous, the snow was thick, and California water managers were not quite satisfied.

What else is new?

The first Sierra snow survey of the year Wednesday found a snowpack across the Sierra with a water content that is now 134 percent of normal for this date.

It's a good sign because plenty of snow in the mountains means more water in the state's reservoirs, which means no drought in the summer, healthy crops and, presumably, tap water galore.

But there is still plenty of time for things to go wrong, according to California's water lords, who generally do not trust Mother Nature even when she's slapping snowballs in their faces.

"We've got a real good start to the year, but still three months to go where we need to have more snow," said [Frank Gehrke](#), the chief snow surveyor for the [California Department of Water Resources](#), after taking the measurements at historic [Phillips Station](#) off Highway 50 near the Sierra-at-[Tahoe Resort](#).

"From a skier's standpoint, it's gorgeous. You can't get much better in California than we've got now. The thing that is always on our minds, though, is whether this sunny weather will keep up for long."

The monthly snow surveys, which traditionally begin right around New Year's Day, are important because almost two-thirds of the water used to irrigate millions of acres of farmland and quench the thirst of California's 37.8 million people is contained in the Sierra snowpack.

The water content of the snow has proved over time to be a reliable measure of how much drinking water will be available in California after the snow melts and fills up the department's reservoirs.

The manual surveys at Phillips, a historic privately owned cabin near Echo Summit, and other locations in the mountains are combined monthly with electronic measurements in an attempt to gauge California's water supply.

Better than 2012

Gehrke measured 4 feet of snow depth at Phillips and a foot of water content Wednesday compared with 4 inches of snow and 0.14 of an inch of water at this time last year.

"That's the picture in a nutshell of how much better off we are this year," he said.

California already has 49 percent of the amount of frozen water expected by April 1, when snowpack is at its peak.

The April 1 measurement is important because the Department of Water Resources is required during the winter to leave a certain amount of space in its reservoirs - from 10 to 20 percent of capacity - for flood-control purposes. Those restrictions are generally relaxed in March.

Even now, plenty of water is sloshing around behind the state's dams. Lake Oroville, the primary storage reservoir for the State Water Project, is 71 percent of capacity, which is 113 percent of normal for this time. Shasta Lake, which is part of the [U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's](#) Central Valley Project and is the largest reservoir in the state, is currently at 73 percent of capacity, or 115 percent of normal.

The state takes water that flows out of reservoirs into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and diverts it to California households, industries and farms.

Fluctuation normal

Low precipitation has been a sporadic problem in recent years, creating more stress for state water managers who have been grappling with a host of other issues, including aging infrastructure and ongoing battles over water deliveries.

The state has rarely been able to deliver the full allotment requested by farmers largely because of pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish, department officials said.

Winter snowfall has been wildly unpredictable from year to year. Last year, Gehrke found only a single 4-inch-deep patch of snow next to Phillips Station.

The snowpack then was only 1 percent of average, the smallest amount in January since measurements began at the 6,800-foot-elevation site in 1964, he said.

Gehrke said huge yearly fluctuations are normal, which is why the California masses should not yet anticipate taking longer showers.

"If things shut down, then not only will you not gain snowpack, but you will start to lose it," he said. "The next three months are going to make the difference between a good water year and a marginal water year."

Peter Fimrite is a [San Francisco Chronicle](#) staff writer. E-mail: pfimrite@sfchronicle.com

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/1st-Sierra-snowpack-survey-looks-good-4162594.php#ixzz2Haqon3Gm>

DWR raises California water delivery estimate for 2013

Western Farm Press

Dec. 27, 2012

Thanks to early season storms, the Department of Water Resources increased its water delivery estimate for calendar year 2013 from 30 to 40 percent of requested State Water Project water.

The delivery estimate – or allocation – of SWP water is expected to further increase as more winter storms roll in. The state normally receives more than 90 percent of its snow and rain from December through April.

Storms last month and those currently sweeping California have replenished reservoirs and deepened the mountain snowpack that normally provides a third of our water as it slowly melts in the spring and early summer.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's principal storage reservoir with a capacity of 3.5 million acre-feet, is at 67 percent of capacity, 107 percent of normal for the date.

Shasta Lake north of Redding, the federal Central Valley Project's principal storage reservoir with a capacity of 4.5 million acre-feet, is at 68 percent of capacity, 109 percent of normal for the date.

The mountain snowpack today holds 93 percent of average water content for the date.

Just a normal winter will significantly increase the allocation of 40 percent of the slightly more than four million acre-feet requested by the 29 public agencies (State Water Project Contractors) that supply SWP water to more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland.

The final SWP allocation this calendar year (2012) was 65 percent of requested deliveries. The final allocation was 80 percent in 2011, up dramatically from the initial allocation of 25 percent. The final allocation was 50 percent in 2010, 40 percent in 2009, 35 percent in 2008, and 60 percent in 2007. The last 100 percent allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years because of Delta pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish – was in 2006.

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Oakdale district agrees to consider San Francisco water sale

By John Holland, jholland@modbee.com

Modesto Bee, November 20, 2012

OAKDALE -- The board of the Oakdale Irrigation District agreed Tuesday to look into a one-year water sale to San Francisco.

The length of the sale is less than the city seeks, but a spokesman there said officials "remain open to any potential OID transfer scenarios."

Other details, including the amount of water and the price, have yet to be negotiated. They could be discussed at a Dec. 18 public meeting, OID chairman Frank Clark said.

The move came two months after fierce protests stopped proposed San Francisco water sales by the neighboring Modesto Irrigation District.

A San Francisco official said last week that it seeks 2,240 acre-feet per year from the OID as a dry-year backup — the same as in the initial MID sale — and possibly more in future deals.

The same general issues surfaced in the hour of public debate that preceded the OID board's closed session on the matter Tuesday. Backers said water transfers could help pay for canal system upgrades, while critics warned of dry-year shortages for farmers.

"I would assume that once San Francisco got their hands on our water, they would be very much involved in wanting to keep the water," cattle rancher Ken Krause said.

Critics said that if the OID has water to sell, it should offer it to farmers seeking to annex their land to the district. This would ease pressure on groundwater, they said.

The OID has been a key player in the water commodity market that has emerged in California over the past three decades. The district has relatively strong rights to the Stanislaus River, making it attractive to distant locales seeking to boost their supplies without building new reservoirs.

San Francisco offered \$700 per acre-foot to start in the first deal with the MID, which taps the Tuolumne River downstream of the city's Hetch Hetchy Water and Power System.

That might not be the price the OID gets, but it does indicate that the city is willing to pay a premium for supplemental water that's guaranteed in dry years.

The OID can draw up to 300,000 acre-feet from the Stanislaus River each year, depending on the Sierra Nevada snowpack. The use is less than that because of conservation efforts and development of some of the district's territory.

The district sold a total of about 41,000 acre-feet per year in a pair of transfers that expired in recent years. One was to domestic users in the Stockton area, the other for releases to enhance the lower Stanislaus River fishery.

Supporters of exploring the San Francisco sale noted that these transfers were completed without any damage to the district's water rights.

Official: City's name draws protest

"Nobody ever squawked, nobody ever said a word, but throw the word 'San Francisco' in there and everyone goes crazy," Clark said.

The OID also is negotiating a sale of up to 2,400 acre-feet to the city of Brisbane, now supplied by next-door San Francisco.

General Manager Steve Knell said transfers protect the OID's rights because the water is put to the "beneficial use" required by state law.

He said transfers make sense because the district's rights do not allow it to carry over excess water from one year to the next. The vast New Melones Reservoir southwest of Angels Camp holds much of the OID's water, but it is controlled by the federal government.

Need to pay for upgrades

Knell said the district needs to pay for system upgrades with a mix of high-price sales to urban areas and expansion of lower-priced irrigation.

A prominent example of the latter is a plan to supply about 7,300 acres of new almond orchards near Knights Ferry.

The board voted 5-0 on Tuesday to apply for annexation of this land, owned by Trinitas Partners. The Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission could consider the request in February.

San Francisco seeks extra water for a system that serves about 2.6 million people in four Bay Area counties.

"Our long-term dry year water supply needs are still the same as when we were negotiating with the Modesto Irrigation District," said Tyrone Jue, director of communications for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, in an e-mail. "Ideally, we would be looking for a multiyear water transfer to cover our projected water shortfalls, but we're still early in the discussion phase and remain open to any potential OID transfer scenarios."

The city would not get water directly from the OID. Instead, the district would deliver water to the MID via an existing connection near Claribel Road, northeast of Modesto and south of Oakdale. The Modesto district in turn would let San Francisco take an equal amount of water at the Hetch Hetchy diversion.

Read more here: http://www.modbee.com/2012/11/20/2464000/oakdale-district-continues-sf.html?story_link=email_msg#storylink=cpy

Water Sale Talk Stirs Up OID

By Dawn M. Henley Staff Reporter dhenley@oakdaleleader.com

November 20, 2012 8:10 p.m.

A packed house of concerned farmers and area citizens filled the Oakdale Irrigation District boardroom on Nov. 20 to hear discussion on a potential water sale to the City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) at the OID Board of Directors regular meeting.

CCSF contacted OID expressing an interest in purchasing water. At the meeting it was reported that CCSF is looking for a one-year water transfer and that the directors were going to learn of the details in closed session.

The directors denied that they knew any details about what CCSF was proposing and said that they just read about it in an area daily metropolitan newspaper. That article had stated that CCSF was seeking an initial sale of 2,240 acre-feet. It also stated that the city was willing to pay a premium for the water – a price of \$700 per acre/foot had been offered by CCSF to Modesto Irrigation District. That deal recently fell through after an uprising from MID constituents.

“I’ve always been a hard sell when it comes to transfers,” said OID director Steve Webb. “I don’t know how anyone can make a decision when they don’t have the facts yet – and we don’t have those.”

If OID sold water to CCSF, it would have to go through MID canals and into the Hetch Hetchy system. OID is currently involved in a CEQA process for a potential water sale to the City of Brisbane, although a contract has not yet been presented.

Director Al Bairos asked the question if OID was better off selling to CCSF and Brisbane or annexing farmers – and what is the value difference.

OID General Manager Steve Knell reported that the district is in the process with consultant CH2M Hill to answer those questions posed by Bairos and the answers may be available in early December.

Once the audience was allowed to comment, some of the back-and-forth between the commenters and the board members got tense.

Farmer Ray Lial said that the farmers aren’t just upset about the entity that the water would go to but that they are upset about the amount of leftover water at the end of the irrigation season that is lost to the federal government (in New Melones) and that water is being transferred out of the district. He asked why that extra water going out couldn’t be offered to the farmers. He added that farmers are also concerned that a one-year commitment to CCSF could turn into a multi-year commitment.

Modesto resident Emerson Drake commented at the meeting that he didn’t understand the math that some of the OID directors were talking about regarding water that was getting left up at

Melones and water savings potential elsewhere. He said that CCSF has built rates into water sales for “almost forever” and that CCSF “refused to negotiate a shorter contract with MID.”

He met with some argument from director Jack Alpers about OID drainage water going to MID. Alpers said the math did make sense and that OID could save that drain water that MID gets for free.

“As MID found out, San Francisco is a big snake,” Drake added.

Farmer Tom Gookin asked the board that if OID got a contract with CCSF and the water has to go down the South Main, then what if the high-risk tunnel on the South Main failed and then OID couldn’t get the water to Nancy Pelosi’s swimming pool. He said that OID needs to “CYA” – cover its “assets.”

Director Frank Clark commented that CCSF has only come to OID with a proposal and he couldn’t answer the question. He had earlier commented that OID has done transfers before but as soon as San Francisco is mentioned, everybody goes crazy. He had also agreed with Drake about San Francisco being a big snake.

Director Herman Doornenbal stated that the OID directors were “in the dark” about what exactly CCSF was proposing.

Denise Hanlan commented that no one had talked about ground water and the table under the City of Oakdale and how transfers affect that. Clark interrupted her and said that wasn’t the issue to be addressed at the meeting. She and Clark went back and forth and he gave her the gavel a couple of times stating she was out of order and the topic wasn’t about the water table.

Stanislaus Farm Bureau representative Tom Orvis referred to the Bay Area, noting that “it’s a different world over there and they have votes.” He said that he’s going to hold OID to complete transparency, whether or not they do this deal. He also cautioned that OID needs to be careful. He noted that on one hand OID is saying it needs the water and have the “Save the Stan” campaign, while on the other hand OID is saying it has the water and to come and get it. He also reminded them to think about municipal water talks that OID has had with the City of Oakdale.

Director Webb commented that it would be less stressful as a board member to tell San Francisco to go away.

Orvis replied that the OID board has a fiduciary responsibility to the district and the people of the district.

Former Oakdale Mayor Pat Kuhn also commented that anyone in public service is just a steward of the resources they’ve been put in charge of and that they don’t own it. She said that it’s a public servant’s job to hear what people have to say and that even if people start to stray slightly, then the leaders should keep an open mind. Kuhn appreciated that director Bairos’ comments showed leadership and that the board should prioritize, do some goal setting, and think about the farmers looking for annexation. She said the idea will be easier to sell if the community feels

they are getting a benefit. She added that she feels strongly about Ag and about water and that maybe some of the farmers getting water is equally important.

Rancher Ken Kraus stated that OID's had good water sales in the past but those never involved the transfer water going through another entity (MID). He said that San Francisco is a huge city with a lot of people and he's concerned that once they get water from OID, it could end up with legal ramifications. He felt that once CCSF got its hands on OID water, then they'd be very involved in wanting to keep it, even if time on the contract had run out.

The Leader apologizes for any misspellings on names of commenters from the audience; they were required only to say their name before commenting, not spell it.

In other business, the board heard a report on the 2013 draft budget and also voted to cancel the Jan. 1, 2013 meeting date.

The next regular meeting of the OID Board of Directors will be at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 4 at 9 a.m. in the boardroom at 1205 East F.

The next regular joint meeting of the Tri-Dam Project is at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 20, also in the OID boardroom.