

**BAY AREA WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

October 3, 2014

Correspondence and media coverage of interest between August 4, 2014 and September 30, 2014

Media Coverage

Water Supply Conditions

Date: September 30, 2014
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Article: California Department of Water Resources Says Dry Water year 2014 Ends Today – Conservation Critical as New Water Year Begins

Date: September 30, 2014
Source: Fox 40 Sacramento
Article: Water Year 2014 Ends Tomorrow as One of the Driest Ever

Date: September 29, 2014
Source: LA Times
Article: Early snow blankets Sierra Nevada, delighting drought-weary California

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Article: California drought tied to climate change? Scientists unsure

Date: September 27, 2014
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Article: Daily water allocation could be the next California drought strategy

Water Supply Management

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Source: Sacramento Bee
Article: Jerry Brown calls for “more ambitious” climate change action at U.N.

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Article: Legislation introduced in Congress addressing rural communities’ water infrastructure funding crisis

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Article: Drought Rallies Support for California Water Projects

Date: September 23, 2014
Source: Associated Press
Article: Plans for \$200 million in drought relief released

Date: September 17, 2014
Source: PR News Wire
Article: As Water Utilities Face Mounting Federal and State Conservation Goals, Dropcounter Introduces CLEAR, a Meter Data Management Solution that Maps Daily, Monthly and Annual Water Consumption Trends. CLEAR Identifies User Trends, Water “Hogs” and Damaging Leaks for Strained Water Districts.

Date: August 4, 2014
Source: SF Gate
Article: 17 California counties create huge PACE program

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California Department of Water Resources Says Dry Water Year 2014 Ends Today - Conservation Critical as New Water Year Begins

Sierra Sun Times, September 30, 2014 –

SACRAMENTO – Water Year 2014, ending today, is going into the record books as one of California's driest ever with no promise that the new water year beginning Wednesday will be any wetter.

As the calendar turns after three years of drought, reservoirs are low, vast tracts of farmland lie fallow and some communities are scrambling for drinking water.

In January, normally California's wettest month, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a drought emergency and followed up with statewide water conservation goals. On September 19, the Governor streamlined the delivery of water to families in dire need.

DWR has reduced State Water Project deliveries to a record low five percent of requests while the federal Central Valley Project has reduced deliveries down to zero for some junior rights holders.

Forest fires, brown lawns, food banks, groundwater legislation and water management debates all are results of a deepening drought as the winter months approach without a good reading of whether they will be wet or dry.

"The immediate certainty is that day-to-day conservation – wise, sparing use of water – is essential as we face the possibility of a fourth dry winter," said DWR Director Mark Cowin.

The Water Year (October 1 – September 30) is ending with less than 60 percent of average precipitation. And on September 1, the state's major reservoirs collectively held only 57 percent of average storage for the date, or about 36 percent of capacity. Cumulative reservoir storage in 1977, to date California's driest year on record, was approximately five million acre-feet less than today but the state in that year had millions fewer people.

Recent storms have been encouraging, but haven't seriously dented the state's drought and forecasters can't accurately predict if we will get the series of major storms required to break the drought.

Predictions El Nino conditions that signal precipitation patterns in some areas of the world have waxed and waned, but meteorologists note that the phenomenon is not a reliable indicator of weather in California, especially not in the Northern Sierra watersheds that feed some of the state's largest reservoirs.

Even if the storms arrive, conservation will still be essential to counter the years-long drain on the state's water supply.

DWR and the Association of California Water Agencies urge all Californians to conserve water by following the advice and tips found at <http://SaveOurWater.com>.

DWR's California Data Exchange Center websites show current water conditions at the state's largest reservoirs and weather stations.

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Water Year 2014 Ends Tomorrow as One of the Driest Ever

FOX 40 SACRAMENTO, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014, BY [RUBEN DOMINGUEZ](#)

SACRAMENTO – Water Year 2014 is drawing to a close tomorrow. Once the calendar turns to October, 2014 will go down as one of the driest years in California history.

Each Water Year lasts from October 1 to September 30. According to the state Department of Water Resources (DWR), Water Year 2015 doesn't look promising at the moment.

According to the DWR, on September 1 California's major reservoirs held only a combined 57% of their average storage — 36% capacity — for the date.

In 1977 — California's driest Water Year on record — had a cumulative reservoir storage around 5 million acre-feet less than 2014. However, there were millions of fewer people in the state at the time.

In addition, State Water Project deliveries have been reduced to a record low 5% of requests. The Federal Central Valley project has decreased deliveries for some junior rights holders as far as down to zero.

With forest fires continuing to ravage the state and no promise of a wet 2015, the DWR is urging California residents to conserve as much water as possible.

"The immediate certainty is that day-to-day conservation — wise, sparing use of water — is essential as we face the possibility of a fourth dry winter," said DWR Director Mark Cowin.

Rainfall and storms in the past week are encouraging signs. However, the DWR says they haven't made any notable dents into the drought and there are no clear indications the major storms needed to break the drought will come.

Even if the storms come, the DWR still stresses major water conservation in order to build up the now much-drained reserves.

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Early snow blankets Sierra Nevada, delighting drought-weary California

LA Times, September 29, 2014

An unusual early snowstorm blanketed the Sierra Nevada over the weekend, but the welcome sight isn't expected to last long as a warming trend spreads across California..

The first snow of the season dumped up to 3 inches along the Lake Tahoe Basin, forcing authorities to shut down California 108 at Sonora Pass, which remained closed Monday, said Tom Dang, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

It was the first time in several years that a storm had dropped so much snow on the Sierra this early in the year, he added.

"We are not complaining," Dang said. "Any and all rain is very much appreciated."

Photographs showed a thick blanket of snow over a picturesque Lake Tahoe community.

Heavenly Mountain Ski Resort welcomed the first snow on its Facebook page while exhorting fans of winter to "keep up the snow dances."

Mammoth Mountain, a popular snowboarding destination, also posted photographs of snow-covered hills and ski lifts.

Mt. Whitney showed a dusting of snow. Two inches of snow were reported at Mt. Tom Fire Lookout, the National Weather Service reported.

But it will all be but a memory come this weekend, when a warming trend is expected to melt most of white stuff, Dang said.

The warming trend is expected to carry over into the Southland, where temperatures are forecast to be 20 degrees above normal, forecasters said.

For breaking news in California, follow @VeronicaRochaLA. She can be reached at veronica.rocha@latimes.com.

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California drought tied to climate change? Scientists unsure

San Francisco Chronicle, September 29, 2014

By Kurtis Alexander

Climate change is fueling record heat in many parts of the world, a team of international scientists said Monday, but a link between global warming and other extreme weather events, including California's devastating drought, remains less certain.

The researchers, whose report this week in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* marks one of the most definitive assessments on climate change to date, said human-caused warming can hasten periods of dry weather, like the three-year spell seen in California. The researchers also suggested that an infamous high-pressure system that has hung over the Pacific Ocean and blocked rainstorms from reaching the West Coast in recent years may be partly the result of climate change.

However, the scientists said they could not conclusively tie global warming to California's lack of rainfall.

"It's a lot easier to associate heat extremes with human influences than it is some of the other extremes," said [Thomas Karl](#), the director of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Climatic Data Center](#) and one of the authors of the new report.

The report represents the emerging efforts of climate scientists to trace extreme weather events to human-caused warming. Researchers have long said attributing single events to climate change is difficult, and usually pointed instead to shifts in long-term weather patterns as evidence of human-caused climate change. But the scientific models have improved.

The report, "Explaining Extreme Events of 2013 from a Climate Perspective," looks at possible connections between 16 extreme bouts of weather last year and climate change. Independent research teams across the globe participated and contributed their findings.

The report's authors concluded that heat waves —five studied in Australia, Europe and Asia — were much more likely and more severe because of burning fossil fuels.

In Australia, which saw its hottest year in history in 2013 coincide with damaging bush fires and the decimation of the cattle industry, researchers used climate models to try to simulate the record heat without an increase in greenhouse gases, and they couldn't.

"It's very hard to imagine how you could have had those temperatures in a world without climate change," said contributor [Peter Stott](#), a scientist with Britain's [Met Office Hadley Centre](#).

But extreme weather events beyond heat could not be definitively tied to climate change, the report's authors said.

One of the independent groups in the study did conclude that climate change may be responsible for the recent mass of air that formed over the Pacific, steering winter storms away from California during the last two rainy seasons.

Noah Diffenbaugh, an associate professor of environmental earth system science at [Stanford University](#), whose team contributed to the report, said his climate models showed that probability of a high-pressure pattern emerging in the absence of modern-day greenhouse gases was low.

“It’s very likely that observed global warming has increased the probability of that atmospheric condition by at least a factor of three,” Diffenbaugh said.

However, the Stanford group was the only one of three that looked at California’s drought that found a connection to human-caused warming. The other two groups, one similarly studying atmospheric conditions and another evaluating ocean surface temperatures, did not find a correlation.

Most researchers agree, however, that California’s warming temperatures will worsen the state’s drought, as heat steps up evaporation. This year California posted its hottest summer since record-keeping began in 1880, according to NOAA.

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Daily water allocation could be the next California drought strategy

San Gabriel Valley Tribune, September 27th, 2014

You probably know your Social Security number, your driver's license number and perhaps the latest wrinkle in mattress marketing, your sleep number.

But do you know your drought number?

The latter represents the amount of water you are allowed to use per day. If you don't know it, you probably should. Not knowing could cost you money. As [California's severe drought](#) moves into a fourth year, state and local water agencies are working on something called "allocation-based rate structures," a kind of precursor to water rationing that's all the rage in Sacramento and in some areas such as Santa Cruz, Irvine and Santa Monica.

Here's how it works: Your local water company, special district or city assigns you and your household a number in gallons — a daily water allocation. Usually, one number applies to maximum indoor water use, i.e. showers, kitchen and bathroom faucets, dishwashers, clothes washers, etc., and an extra allocation is assigned for outdoor use such as lawn irrigation.

Using census records, aerial photography and satellite imagery, an agency can determine a property's efficient water usage.

At the Irvine Ranch Water District, number of residents, amount of [landscaping](#) and even medical needs are factored into a household's water allocation or water budget.

"We want you to stay within that budget. That way we know you are using water in an efficient way," according to an instructional video on the Orange County water agency's website.

While some call it a more equal way to meter out mandatory [water conservation](#), others call it social engineering. Some say the idea simply will not work.

In July, the State Water Resources Control Board passed stage one emergency regulations, giving powers to all local water agencies to fine \$500 per violation.

"We were concerned with the lack of alarm we were hearing," said Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. "Our reservoirs are low. Half of the state's storage is gone. [It's a frightening situation.](#)"

Beginning sometime in October, the state water board will have collected sufficient data from local water agencies to report how much water per person per day residents of the state are using. Already, Marcus said Los Angeles residents are down to 89 gallons per person per day, from more than 100 earlier in the year. Sacramento water use has dropped as well, but it is still way higher per capita than Los Angeles, she said.

After the new numbers are crunched, the state board could order the local agencies to implement stronger water-use regulations, such as banning all watering of lawns and all decorative fountains, she said.

Right now, Marcus is recommending that water agencies, particularly retail ones, switch to water-budgeted allocations. But it is unlikely the state board will assign every resident a drought number. That would be left up to local agencies and cities.

She said at the very least, water agencies and cities should move toward “incentivizing water use through different kinds of rate structures” but declined to get more specific.

“Rates send a powerful signal,” she said. “It is one thing to ask for voluntary action ... but that can only go so far. Rates should be designed so you send a financial signal (to customers)” and to enable them to know their water use and compare that with their neighbors.

“This winter, we will be looking at this information on water production, specifically gallons per capita per day. That will give us a better story of what is going on and people can compare themselves with other communities. We will then consider more regulations,” Marcus said.

Santa Monica model

Some local agencies are implementing a drought number model. In Santa Monica, the City Council passed a first-reading in August of an ordinance that would apply an indoor water allocation of 68 gallons per-person-per-capita for every single-family home with four people, said Gilbert Borboa, water resources manager for the city of Santa Monica.

“A customer uses beyond that allocation, then it is possible some penalties might apply,” he said. Today, residents are using about 88 gallons per person per day in Santa Monica, he said.

The City Council will vote on the water-allocation plan next month. Santa Monica will work on allocations for bigger households, apartments and condominiums and for commercial establishments such as hotels, he said. Indoor use is “essential” for health and safety, while the ordinance labels outdoor use as “non-essential.”

“Watering plants and lawns make them all look green and pretty, but that is not essential. Essential is for sustaining life (indoor use),” Borboa said.

The per person allocation is gaining momentum as are other water conservation ideas.

“I believe it is coming. There are agencies already doing it,” said Mike Touhey, a member of the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District which serves nearly 1 million residents.

Eastern Municipal Water District, which covers communities in the Inland Empire from Riverside to Hemet, has enacted a Stage 2 drought plan. Each single-family household with three residents gets 60 gallons per person per day. An outdoor allocation is provided based on whether a house has a pool or turf or both. Any household going over the total allocation will be charged an “excessive rate,” according to the plan.

Matt Lyons, director of planning and conservation for the city of Long Beach, said the water allocation method is deeply flawed. Lyons said calculating an accurate allocation for a household or a hotel can’t be done because aerial images don’t tell the whole story such as elevation, or what lies under a canopy of trees — factors that affect water use.

“No. We have not embraced that at all,” he said. “You can’t do it with any degree of accuracy or without being intrusive.”

Instead, Long Beach has seen water conservation successes since 2009 through extensive outreach programs, including paying homeowners \$3.50 per square foot to remove thirsty lawns and replace them with drought-tolerant plants.

So far, 1,400 residents have eliminated their lawns and on average, each uses 22 percent less water, he said. The city has seen a drop in water use of 10,000 acre-feet from 2007 to 2009, he said. “Behavior change is driving this water savings,” he said.

Making water hogs pay a top-tier rate is another trend gaining popularity among water agencies.

For example, Irvine charges a “wasteful” rate of \$12.60 per hundred cubic feet, well above the \$1.34 base rate.

Pasadena City Council member Margaret McAustin said Pasadena Water and Power, like many cities including Los Angeles, bill customers using tiered water rates. Customers pay more when they use more. But this doesn’t stop residents who can afford higher bills from wasting water, she said.

“We are talking about putting in a new tier for people who use a lot of water,” she said.

Jonathan Parfrey, executive director of Climate Resolve and a former commissioner at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, likes the water-allocation system.

“This is a terrific idea. People need to live within their water means. That is what a water budget offers,” he said. He’d like to see cities add more, steeper tiers, charge for excessive water use and re-direct the revenues into conservation and water recycling.

Lyons, of Long Beach, cautioned against charging too much for water because it could be a violation of Proposition 218, which says water agencies can only charge for the cost of water service. If a municipal agency charges more for water, it can’t make a profit, so it will have to charge someone else less. This leads to inequities, he explained.

He characterized water budgeting as a passing fad. “In water conservation, people are always looking for or thinking they found the magic bullet,” he said. “We’d rather change the water culture.”

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Bay Area Water Agency Offering Rebates Up To \$100 For Rainwater Collection

KPIX, Channel 5, September 30, 2014

REDWOOD CITY (KPIX 5) — The finishing touches are being put on a plan to give people a rebate of up to \$100 on their water bills.

All you have to start with is one barrel for your water collection system and you could get money back.

From his roof, Redwood City resident Eric McCrystal can collect 450 gallons of rainwater. So when he heard about the new rebate program for runoff, he got excited.

“I think that’s great,” McCrystal said. “Everyone should be collecting water.”

If you show a receipt for a 50 gallon water barrel and submit a photo showing how it’s set up to collect rainwater from your roof, you could get up to a \$100 rebate.

A single family home can get a rebate for up to two barrels, and four barrels for multi-family homes or commercial properties.

One barrel represents less than half of the 129 gallons the water agency’s average customer uses each day. Officials are hoping the rain barrel rebate will encourage new conservation habits.

“Roughly 30-50 percent of all residential water use is outdoors so even 50 gallons can make a contribution,” said Michael Hurley, water resource manager at the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency.

The rebate could start as early as this Friday. Water districts with the Bay Area Supply and Conservation Agency, which includes most of San Mateo County, parts of Alameda and Santa Clara counties, can take advantage of the rebate program.

Now if it’ll just rain.

[Click here to watch](#)

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County to offer rebates for rainwater barrel use

Daily Journal, September 29, 2014, By Michelle Durand

San Mateo County will soon start offering up to \$100 rebates to users of rain barrels as part of a program encouraging residents to conserve drinking water and use other sources for landscaping.

The City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County Board of Directors this month agreed to give up to \$25,000 to the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency to develop the pilot project. The money was already allocated in the budget for the countywide storm water program.

C/CAG is “very excited” by the plan which works hand in hand with its existing storm water pollution prevention work, Executive Director Sandy Wong said.

“It’s just another one of our efforts to get the message out and now we also have the drought,” Wong said.

C/CAG will offer \$50 rebates per barrel and water supply agencies participating in the program will match that investment dollar for dollar for a total of \$100 or the cost of the barrel if less. This means anyone in the county can get the C/CAG portion but may receive double. With many rain barrels costing around \$100, the rebates will make them free or close to it.

Each water account is eligible for up to two barrel rebates for residential properties and four for commercial properties. Barrels must be purchased between now and June 30, 2015, and maintained for at least three years after receipt of the rebate.

Wong said BAWSCA is still working out the administrative details but anticipates the promotion beginning some time in October.

Owners will be responsible for installing the barrels but will be given guidelines as part of the rebate application package. C/CAG is also working with the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District to make sure the barrels have screening to prevent mosquito breeding in the standing water.

C/CAG first approached BAWSCA earlier this year about encouraging the use of barrel to capture runoff. The benefits are twofold — the amount of runoff and pollutants from individual properties via gutters and downspouts headed to storm drains is reduced as is the amount of potable water used for outdoor irrigation.

C/CAG concedes that, at an average of 50 gallons, any individual barrel provides relatively minor benefits but if more widely used can deliver significant impacts. Using the barrels also helps residents see stormwater management as a benefit, according to C/CAG.

Rebate applicants must provide receipts for the purchased barrels and photos of the installation. They are also subject to verification by either the water supply agency or the mosquito district staff.

The pilot program will run through June 30, 2015. At the end of the fiscal year, C/CAG and BAWSCA will decide whether to extend it longer.

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Jerry Brown calls for 'more ambitious' climate change action at U.N.

Sacramento Bee, September 24, 2014

Gov. Jerry Brown, appealing to world leaders for joint action on climate change, issued a forceful defense Tuesday of plans to expand California's cap-and-trade program to vehicle fuels next year.

In remarks at a United Nations summit in New York, Brown held out California as a "hopeful example" of bipartisanship in the effort to reduce carbon emissions, even as Republicans and some moderate Democrats criticize Brown in California for regulations they say will increase the price of fuel.

Brown said California will meet its goal of reducing carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and within six months will set a new goal for 2030 "that will be more ambitious, that will require more technology and will also require heightened political will."

Brown's remarks were the highest-profile yet in his effort to promote California climate policies on an international stage. The Democratic governor is widely expected to win re-election to a fourth term in November, and the speech prefaces what will be a point of focus in his final four years in office.

The New York summit, attended by more than 120 world leaders, was designed to push forward negotiation of a climate change treaty in Paris in 2015. Brown has argued climate change agreements reached between states and other sub-national governments can be used to pressure heads of state in Paris, a meeting he has called "the crucial event for the future of the world."

"I believe that from the bottom up we can make real impact, and we need to join together," Brown said.

Progress on a climate change accord has been tenuous, with difficulties evidenced by the failure to reach an international agreement in Copenhagen five years ago, and by partisan discord in Washington.

The president of China and prime minister of India – whose countries, along with the United States, are the world's three largest emitters of carbon dioxide – skipped the event.

President Barack Obama said the United States will put forward a new emissions target by early next year.

"The climate is changing faster than our efforts to address it," Obama said. "The alarm bells keep ringing. Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them. We have to answer the call."

In two statements lasting a total of about 7 minutes, Brown called climate change an "existential threat" to humanity.

"Carbon really has been at the basis of the incredible progress and prosperity and affluence that so many people enjoy," Brown said. "But that progress now has the dark shadow of the toxicity of carbon itself: the pollution; the smog; the health effects; the rising sea level; in California, the forest fires, which are now burning for more days than historically was ever imaginable."

He said, "It's real, it's here, and we've got to put a price on carbon."

Oil industry groups in California have pressured Brown this year to delay an expansion of the state's cap-and-trade program to vehicle fuels in January, with Republicans and some Democrats joining in the lobbying.

"Now the great challenge is to stay the course," Brown said. "Even today as we speak, there are advertisements being purchased on the airwaves of California in an attempt to persuade the people that cap-and-trade should somehow go away, that it's going to raise the price of oil."

Industry analysts estimate expanding California's cap-and-trade program to vehicle fuels in January could result in a 10- to 20-cent-per-gallon increase in fuel prices, but Brown has benefited in an election year from falling prices.

"Luckily the price of oil has been coming down ever since those ads went on the air just a month or so ago," Brown said. "So somebody's watching over California."

Brown's Republican opponent in the November election, Neel Kashkari, said Brown's effort on climate change is "well meaning" but misguided. He criticized the use of a portion of cap-and-trade revenue to fund California's high-speed rail project.

"The idea that by raising the cost of electricity and gasoline in California, that's going to do anything to help the earth's climate, it's pure economic folly," he said in an interview. "If he was serious about climate change, he would be taking the cap-and-trade revenue and funding basic research at Stanford, at Berkeley at Caltech, so we develop cleaner technologies that are also cheaper, and we export them around the world."

Kashkari announced Tuesday that he would appear at a Mobil gas station in Burbank on Wednesday, giving \$25 for gas to people who visit and smash a toy train.

Brown has championed environmental causes since he was governor before, from 1975 to 1983, and it has become a legacy issue in his third term. He has traveled to China and Mexico to sign nonbinding agreements on climate change, and he has forged similar pacts with officials in Canada and other U.S. states.

"This is a heroic challenge that we have to face," he said.

Though nonbinding, environmentalists consider agreements Brown is pushing to be significant diplomatically. The California market is so large that policies enacted have been replicated by other states and the federal government, including fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction standards.

"The whole game here is leverage on other countries' emissions," said David Victor, a professor of international relations at the University of California, San Diego, and author of the book

“Global Warming Gridlock.” “We can work hard in California and that’s 1 percent of the problem, which is nothing. Or we can work hard in California and we can link our efforts to other countries. ... California has tremendous soft power, if you like, on the climate change issue.”

In talks on climate change at any level, Victor said, “Jerry Brown has a tremendous amount of credibility here.”

Brown was scheduled to meet privately in New York with Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state, and Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor, among others.

Brown cast combating climate change as a bipartisan effort, noting that his Republican predecessor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, signed California’s landmark greenhouse gas reduction law in 2006.

“The California story is a very hopeful one,” Brown said. “It’s a story of Republican and Democratic governors pioneering innovative climate strategies. It’s not been easy, it’s not without contest, but we’re making real progress.”

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Legislation introduced in Congress addressing rural communities' water infrastructure funding crisis

WaterWorld,

WASHINGTON, DC, Sept. 23, 2014 -- On Thursday, Sept. 18, Congressman Marlin Stutzman (R-IN) introduced the "Water Supply Cost Savings Act," or "Savings Act," legislation, a measure that would provide small communities across the nation with critical information on the use of water wells and water-well systems to deliver [high-quality, affordable drinking water](#).

The Savings Act (HR 5659) is aimed at reducing the costs to federal, state and local governments in providing quality drinking water to millions of Americans living in rural and isolated communities by promoting cost-effective community well-water systems. The Act was greeted with enthusiastic support from the water supply industry, including the Water Systems Council (WSC), the Water Quality Association (WQA) and the National Groundwater Association (NGWA).

"We are grateful to Congressman Stutzman for his leadership in championing the first piece of national legislation to provide local community decision makers with a cost-effective option to utilize smaller domestic well-water systems to meet community drinking water needs," said Bo Andersson, WSC president. "Local water supply projects completed by WSC's Water Well Trust have clearly demonstrated that these smaller systems can save the nation millions of dollars in [infrastructure investment](#)."

To assist small communities with their consideration of drinking water technology needs, the Savings Act establishes a Drinking Water Technology Clearinghouse where the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Secretary of Agriculture will disseminate information on cost-effective, innovative and alternative drinking water delivery systems, including systems that are supported by wells.

"The Savings Act is a simple, commonsense bill that can save taxpayer dollars and, importantly, help rural communities gain access to much-needed high-quality drinking water," Stutzman said. "I am thrilled to have the support of the Water Systems Council, the Water Quality Association, and the National Groundwater Association to advance this important legislation."

There are 52,000 community water systems in the United States, of which 41,801 are small community water systems (3,300 or fewer people). EPA's most recent [Drinking Water Needs Survey](#) placed the shortfall in drinking water infrastructure funding for small communities at \$64.5 billion. The Savings Act will encourage these small communities to consider less expensive drinking water systems supplied by wells that could save taxpayers billions of dollars in infrastructure costs.

"Delivering high-quality drinking water at a lower cost is a win-win for small communities," said Margaret Martens, WSC executive director. "The local projects we have already completed through the Water Well Trust have realized savings of as much as 94 percent over traditional long-pipe, centralized drinking water systems, proving that water wells are a reliable, cost-effective way for budget-challenged communities to provide access to safe drinking water for their residents."

Diann Scott, VP of marketing for North America Water Systems, Franklin Electric and a member of the WSC board, added, "Small communities often have difficulty financing the construction and maintenance of traditional long-pipe drinking water systems, as the cost per resident can be prohibitively expensive. The Savings Act will help rural America and other small community systems cost-effectively meet critical water needs and public health challenges while supporting domestic manufacturing and jobs.

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Drought Rallies Support for California Water Projects

[Craig Miller](#), [KQED Science](#) | September 23, 2014 |

Californians continue to see the ongoing drought as a priority — and that may be driving a willingness to spend billions on securing their future water supplies.

According to the latest polling from the non-partisan [Public Policy Institute of California](#), water and the drought clock in as the second most pressing issue among those polled, eclipsed only by jobs and the economy. Nearly nine-in-ten of the poll's respondents said they considered water supply to be a "problem," with almost two-thirds (65 percent) saying they consider it a "big problem."

Given that level of urgency, it seems like no surprise that, when asked how they'll vote for the \$7.5 billion package of water measures now on the ballot as [Proposition 1](#), 58 percent said "yes." That's enough to pass it and nearly double the proportion (29 percent) that said they planned to vote "no." Support was consistent across the state, though highest in the Bay Area and Inland Empire.

It may also not be surprising, considering that a "No on 1" campaign has yet to emerge with enough money behind it for media saturation. There is an organized [opposition to Prop 1](#), largely a coalition of Delta and fishing interests.

Detractors say it would be spending too much money for too little water. Some Delta groups have opposed the bond, claiming that it [would hasten realization](#) of Governor Jerry Brown's [plan to build two cavernous tunnels](#) to transport Sacramento River water across the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Proponents of the bond measure say that it's written to be "tunnels-neutral."

This willingness to pony up for water improvements seems to spill over to the local level. More than 7-in-10 respondents to the PPIC poll said that hypothetically, they'd also support local bond measures for projects that would help keep the water flowing.

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Plans for \$200 million in drought relief released

Associated Press, Tuesday, September 23, 2014

SACRAMENTO -- State water officials on Tuesday released plans for spending almost a third of the \$687 million emergency drought relief package approved by lawmakers earlier this year.

More than \$200 million in expedited bond funding would benefit 110 projects throughout the state, ranging from the city of Mt. Shasta to San Diego, under the draft recommendations by the state Department of Water Resources. The agency plans to make final decisions by Oct. 31.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency in January, as vanishing snowpack and rainfall has led to farmers fallowing fields and mandatory water restrictions. The next month, the Legislature approved fast-tracked legislation, SB103 and SB104, to address the immediate effects of the three-year drought on communities while accelerating bond funding for public works projects that will better prepare agencies for future droughts.

"There's many ways we can better use the water we have," Brown said when announcing the legislation. "You can't manufacture water."

One of the projects recommended Tuesday would replace 18 miles of an Amador Water Agency canal, 50 miles southeast of Sacramento, with a pipeline to save water that is now evaporating or seeping into the ground. Another would fund three new wells serving rural communities facing water shortages in Ukiah.

All the projects will need another \$400 million from local and federal sources to be completed. The water department has another \$250 million available from the drought relief package to distribute more awards to projects next spring.

Already this year, various state agencies have spent or committed an additional \$100 million to address more immediate drought problems under the emergency legislation.

For example, more than 100,000 households received boxes from food banks while 2,000 farm workers received help to pay the rent, according to the Department of Social Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development.

The package also has funded work for young people through the California Conservation Corps. The agency says it has used money to pay for programs to clear brush and other wildfire hazards across the state, including at Silverwood Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California and Mount Tamalpais in Marin County.

Other pots of money made available for the drought have yet to be tapped. The California Department of Food and Agriculture received \$10 million to fund water efficiency programs in farms but has yet to announce recipients.

State officials also plan to buy a turbine for a hydroelectric dam near Oroville that will generate more power using less water. That involves \$10 million redirected from the state fund collecting fees from polluters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Brown signed an executive order last week to buy drinking water for residents whose wells have gone dry, though no dollar amount has been attached. He and legislative leaders have also placed a bond measure on the November ballot to authorize \$7.5 billion in borrowing for long-term water supply and conservation projects.

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As Water Utilities Face Mounting Federal and State Conservation Goals, Dropcountr Introduces CLEAR, a Meter Data Management Solution that Maps Daily, Monthly and Annual Water Consumption Trends CLEAR Identifies User Trends, Water "Hogs" and Damaging Leaks for Strained Water Districts

PRNewsWire, September 17, 2014

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., -- Dropcountr, the leading provider of digital water conservation solutions, today released its first flagship utility product CLEAR, a meter-agnostic Meter Data Management (MDM) platform that enables utilities to efficiently meet increasing state and federal water conservation goals. Ushering in a new wave of smart monitoring and efficient reporting, CLEAR functions as a traditional MDM solution, but goes beyond to provide strained water utilities first-time access to visual monitoring and reporting, tailored customer care, meter-agnostic analytics and flexible filtering.

Purissima Hills Water District, a Dropcountr customer and user of CLEAR, sees the benefits of the platform. "We needed a simple, but powerful MDM solution to monitor our service area, so we chose to use CLEAR," said Patrick Walter, General Manager, Purissima Hills Water District.

Designed to meet the needs of utilities and municipalities across the U.S., Dropcountr is initially targeting the drought-stricken West with its first flagship utility product, CLEAR. Whether a utility is managing a service area of 5,000 residents or 5 million, CLEAR's simple user interface visually maps daily, monthly and annual water consumption and identifies user trends, problematic water hogs and damaging leaks. And, utilities can now quickly aggregate and export monthly usage data for newly codified reporting regulation in a matter of a few clicks.

Additional CLEAR Benefits:

Active Consumer Engagement Translates to Happy, Proactive Customers: CLEAR allows utility staff to easily identify and engage specific customer segments, sending personalized messages, relevant rebates and targeted conservation tips via email or push messages. By leveraging Dropcountr's mobile app, utilities can actively engage customers in a timely, cost-effective medium that wasn't previously available with traditional snail mail campaigns. Smart meter homes can be notified before users exceed rate-tiers or experience costly leaks. And utilities can more easily access a customer's profile, engagement history, and account records to better meet their needs. CLEAR also provides customer web screen mirroring, which makes customer support calls fast and easy for staff.

Big Meter Data is Manageable with Meter-Agnostic Analytics + Flexible Filtering: With CLEAR, utilities can harness the benefits of big data, with a single streamlined MDM solution that manages data analytics from multiple smart meter providers. CLEAR's analytics are meter-agnostic and optimized for all metered data, so utilities can access their entire service area and filter data by customer segments, usage, and location to identify trends and abnormal use. By pre-packaging the analytics, utility staff can reliably manage their service area using CLEAR.

"The drought has continued to challenge utilities in new ways – now staff must quickly and effectively communicate with their customers, and assemble system data for mandatory reporting. In response, we consulted with utilities and designed CLEAR to be a turnkey solution for all utilities to save time and resources- making monitoring, outreach and reporting easy," said Robb Barnitt, CEO of Dropcountr.

About Dropcountr

Dropcountr is the leading provider of digital water conservation solutions that empower consumers and utilities to save water and money. Its mobile-based water conservation platform provides daily water consumption data for smart-metered residences and analytics to consumers to change behavior, identify leaks, and take advantage of utility rebates. Dropcountr partners with water districts and utilities to engage consumers and meet efficiency goals through behavioral science strategies, leveraging CLEAR. Dropcountr's mobile platform is now available for free on iOS, Android and the web. For more information about Dropcountr visit: <http://dropcountr.com/> and follow @dropcountr on Twitter.

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17 California counties create huge PACE program

SF Gate, August 4, 2014 David R. Baker

Four years ago, federal regulators nearly killed an innovative way to finance home improvements that save energy.

Now that idea is surging back to life.

Known as Property Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE, the system lets homeowners borrow money for upgrades and pay it back bit-by-bit on their property tax bills. The idea, born in Berkeley in 2008, quickly spread across the country. Many homeowners used it to pay for solar arrays or efficient furnaces.

But in 2010 federal authorities objected, saying PACE posed a risk to mortgage lenders should those homeowners default. While some PACE programs tailored specifically to commercial properties continued, most residential programs stopped cold.

On Tuesday, however, 17 California counties will announce the launch of the nation's largest PACE program yet, CaliforniaFirst. Backed by a new insurance fund created by the state, they are confident they can put the federal government's concerns to rest. And cut energy use in the process.

"We always knew that this could be a very powerful tool to help people save energy and save money," said [Cisco DeVries](#), CEO of Renewable Funding, an Oakland company that will run CaliforniaFirst. "It's exciting and it's gratifying to see this come back around."

The 17 participating counties represent 14 million residents, more than a third of California's population. Bay Area counties taking part include Alameda, Marin, Napa, Santa Clara, San Mateo and Solano. San Francisco and Sonoma counties already have their own PACE programs.

Although the details can vary, PACE programs typically let property owners borrow money for home efficiency or solar projects, money that they then repay as a line item on their property taxes. CaliforniaFirst, which stands for [Financing Initiative for Renewable and Solar Technology](#), will allow loans up to \$75,000, with repayment times ranging from 5 to 20 years. Renewable Funding has secured \$300 million in private financing to provide the loans.

[Jeff Silver](#) borrowed about \$32,000 to pay for upgrades to his two-unit home in Emeryville, including installing new furnaces for both units as well as an efficient water heater. He'll pay the money back over 15 years.

"If I had to come up with 32 grand out of pocket, I would have sucked it up and kept using a space heater," said Silver, 38, who lives in one unit and rents out the other. "The heater was expensive, and it didn't heat things that well. My new furnace is so much better."

The Federal Housing Finance Agency, which oversees [Fannie Mae](#) and Freddie Mac, feared that PACE could be a problem should a large number of participating homes plunge into foreclosure. PACE loans attach to the properties as liens, and the agency complained that those liens would take priority over mortgage holders in case of foreclosure. The agency advised Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac not to purchase mortgages on PACE properties.

Many state and federal officials pushed back, saying the agency was reacting to a problem that didn't exist. Some PACE programs continued in spite of the housing agency's stance. The wave of defaults that the agency feared never materialized.

Last year, California created a \$10 million fund designed specifically to address federal concerns. If banks foreclose on a home with a PACE lien, the fund will cover any of Fannie Mae's or Freddie Mac's losses attributable to that lien.

The Housing Finance Agency has not changed its official stance in response. But neither has it taken any action against PACE programs starting up again in California and elsewhere.

"The state of California has taken pretty aggressive action to mitigate the risk to mortgage lenders," said DeVries, who drafted Berkeley's original PACE program. "The result has been to open the door for PACE, for residential properties, to move forward again."

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