

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

June 3, 2022

Correspondence and media coverage of interest between May 19, 2022 and June 1, 2022

Correspondence

From: Marty Mackowski
Judy Schriebman
Andrea Torres
Marc Norton
Gregg Harris
Lindsay DeBoer
Judith S. Anderson
Barbara J. Williams
Elizabeth Finn
Bianca Molgora
Marty Mackowski
Pamela Smithers
Evan Elias
Sarah Stiles
Steve Bicknell
Patricia Morton
To: BAWSCA Board of Directors
Date: June 1, 2022 – May 19, 2022
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your
Lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

From: Nancy Arbuckle
To: BAWSCA Board
Date: May 27, 2022
Subject: Copy of email sent to SFPUC – for your records

From: Libby Higgs
To: SFPUC
CC: BAWSCA Board
Date: May 26, 2022
Subject: LA Times Article

From: Mark Moulton
To: SFPUC
CC: BAWSCA Board
Date: May 26, 2022
Subject: Causes of the California drought

From: Chris Gilbert
To: SFPUC
CC: BAWSCA Board
Date: May 26, 2022
Subject: Board communication

Correspondence, cont'd.:

From: James Clarke
To: SFPUC
CC: BAWSCA Board
Date: May 26, 2022
Subject: Continued Water Issues

From: Mark Stechbart
To: BAWSCA Board, Nicole Sandkulla, NCCWD
Date: May 27, 2022
Subject: Don't drag this out—lawn be gone fail

Press Release

From: SFPUC
Date: May 24, 2022
Press Release: The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Urges Customers to Reduce Outdoor Water Use

From: Coalition of Winneman Wintu Tribe, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Save California Salmon, Little Manila Rising, Restore the Delta
Date: May 24, 2022
Press Release: Tribes and Environmental Justice Groups Link Bay-Delta Collapse to Water Rights From California's Racist Past

Media Coverage

Bay Delta Plan:

Date: June 1, 2022
Source: Western Farm Press
Article : Bill to accelerate Bay-Delta Plan defeated

Water Supply Conditions:

Date: May 28, 2022
Source: CBS Bay Area
Article: Weather's unwanted guest: Nasty La Nina keeps popping up

Water Use Restrictions:

Date: June 1, 2022
Source: AgAlert
Article: Urban water use is latest target for drought cutbacks

Date: May 29, 2022
Source: Cal Matters
Article: As drought persists, water rights on agenda

Date: May 24, 2022
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: California orders water supplies to mandate restrictions. Here's how much further they could go

Water Use Restrictions, cont'd.:

Date: May 24, 2022
Source: Mercury News
Article: California drought: Water wasters could face fines of up to \$10,000 in Santa Clara County under new rules

Date: May 24, 2022
Source: Sacramento Bee
Article: California bans watering of 'non functional' lawns around businesses as drought persists

Date: May 23, 2022
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: Newsom says California could get mandatory water restrictions as drought crisis deepens

Date: May 23, 2022
Source: CalMatters
Article: 'Everyone loses': Sacramento Valley struggles to survive unprecedented water cuts

Date: May 23, 2022
Source: Office of Governor Newsom
Article: Governor Newsom Convenes Summit with Local Water Leaders, Urges More Aggressive Response to Ongoing Drought

Conservation:

Date: May 31, 2022
Source: Forbes
Article: How Greywater Systems Can Help You Save Money And Water: An Interview With Leigh Jerrard Of Greywater Corps

Date: May 29, 2022
Source: Fox 40
Article: California adopting more aggressive water conservation rules; what to know

Date: May 23, 2022
Source: LA Times
Article: Newsom urges aggressive water conservation and warns of statewide restrictions

Water Infrastructure:

Date: May 27, 2022
Source: GV Wire
Article: Gray Declares Victory in Effort to Keep Reservoir Projects Moving Forward

Date: May 25, 2022
Source: GovTech.com
Article: Tech Helps Map and Manage Groundwater in California

Drought Impact:

Date: May 27, 2022
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: California's drought has caused entire towns to sink nearly a foot in just one year

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Christiane Barth

From: marty mackowski <vistamartym@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 1, 2022 4:26 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

Ratepayers reject use of our money to pursue a doomed lawsuit aimed at preserving excessive diversions from the Tuolumne River, the source of our drinking water. The state notified you in October, 2021 that these excessive diversions are unacceptable, in light of the environmental damage they're causing. Rather than work with the state to restore the environment, you are suing.

The Tuolumne is one of the Sierra Nevada rivers that feeds the San Francisco Bay-Delta. This entire ecosystem is on the brink of ecological collapse. Six fish species are now listed as threatened or endangered, and once-bountiful wild salmon populations are on the verge of extinction. Toxic algae blooms that flourish in the stagnant cesspool left after excessive upstream diversions threaten people, pets, and wildlife. The salmon fishing industry, and coastal communities they support, are struggling to survive. Salmon runs that are central to tribal culture and spirituality are in danger of being lost forever.

The Tuolumne River has among the worst flows of any Central Valley salmon river, particularly in dry years. It is not a surprise that over the past 30 years, mismanagement by the SFPUC, which supplies water to BAWSCA, as well as the Modesto and Turlock irrigation districts that also syphon from the Tuolumne, have produced the worst salmon recovery record of any major Central Valley river.

Your constituents on the SF Peninsula strongly support the environment. In 2016, more than 70% of Bay Area voters supported Measure AA, agreeing to tax themselves to restore the Bay's wetlands.

A peer review of your faulty restoration plan, commissioned by the National Marine Fisheries Service, confirmed that the plan is not supported by credible science.

We appreciate that BAWSCA agencies are committed to ensuring reliable water supplies to residents. We want reliable water too. The evidence shows that BAWSCA can maintain highly reliable water supplies while taking needed steps to protect the Tuolumne River and the Bay-Delta. It is time for BAWSCA and the SFPUC to catch up with communities like Los Angeles and Orange County, which are far ahead when it comes to investing in alternative water supplies like water recycling.

Again, we strongly encourage you to drop your lawsuit over the Bay-Delta Plan and support real environmental protections. We are confident that investments in proven water management tools, currently not being used, can ensure a reliable water supply, while supporting a healthy Tuolumne River and Bay-Delta.

Sincerely,

marty mackowski
45 Los Charros Ln
portola valley, CA 94028

Christiane Barth

From: Judy Schriebman <judymarinsierra@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 1:34 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

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Sincerely,

Judy Schriebman
3 Poco Paso
San Rafael, CA 94903

Christiane Barth

From: Andrea Torres <drea618@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 8:07 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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Sincerely,
Andrea Torres

Christiane Barth

From: Marc Norton <nortonsf@protonmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 6:40 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

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Again, we strongly encourage you to drop your lawsuit over the Bay-Delta Plan and support real environmental protections. We are confident that investments in proven water management tools, currently not being used, can ensure a reliable water supply, while supporting a healthy Tuolumne River and Bay-Delta.

Sincerely,

Marc Norton
468 29th Street
San Francisco, CA 94131

Christiane Barth

From: GREGG HARRIS <harrisharbor@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 30, 2022 2:10 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

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Sincerely,

GREGG HARRIS
1712 Delaware Ave
West Sacramento, CA 95691

Christiane Barth

From: Lindsay DeBoer <LINDSAYDEBOER@YAHOO.COM>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 9:13 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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We appreciate that BAWSCA agencies are committed to ensuring reliable water supplies to residents. We want reliable water too. The evidence shows that BAWSCA can maintain highly reliable water supplies while taking needed steps to protect the Tuolumne River and the Bay-Delta. It is time for BAWSCA and the SFPUC to catch up with communities like Los Angeles and Orange County, which are far ahead when it comes to investing in alternative water supplies like water recycling.

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Sincerely,

Lindsay DeBoer
24955 Estribos
Mission Viejo, CA 92692

Christiane Barth

From: Judith S Anderson <jskanderson@earthlink.net>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 5:36 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

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Sincerely,

Judith S Anderson
1090 Robin Street
Reno, NV 89509

Christiane Barth

From: Barbara. J. Williams <bjw7us@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 11:27 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

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Sincerely,

Barbara. J. Williams
1720 MacArthur Blvd. #521
Oakland, CA 94602

Christiane Barth

From: Elizabeth Finn <lisabushfinn@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 7:56 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

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Sincerely,

Elizabeth Finn
224 Haight Ave
Alameda, CA 94501

Christiane Barth

From: Bianca Molgora <biancamsf@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 5:09 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

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Again, we strongly encourage you to drop your lawsuit over the Bay-Delta Plan and support real environmental protections. We are confident that investments in proven water management tools, currently not being used, can ensure a reliable water supply, while supporting a healthy Tuolumne River and Bay-Delta.

Sincerely,

Bianca Molgora
3976 Folsom St.
San Francisco, CA 94110

Christiane Barth

From: marty mackowski <vistamartym@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 1:08 PM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

I am writing to ask you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The state is seeking to better balance water use in order to protect the Bay-Delta, the Central Valley rivers that flow into it, and the fish and wildlife that live there. Your ratepayers do not want to fund anti-environmental lawsuits. They strongly support environmental protections.

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Sincerely,

marty mackowski
45 Los Charros Lane
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Christiane Barth

From: Pamela Smithers <psmithrs@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 11:31 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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Sincerely,

Pamela Smithers
1819 Vallejo St
Saint Helena, CA 94574

Christiane Barth

From: Evan Elias <eeliasmail@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 11:17 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

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Sincerely,

Evan Elias
1096 Eddy St, 305
San Francisco, CA 94109

Christiane Barth

From: Sarah Stiles <fire@SarahStiles.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 10:50 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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Sincerely,

Sarah Stiles
1933 Knolls Dr.
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Lourdes Enriquez

Subject: FW: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

From: Steve Bicknell <steveb@silveradocontractors.com>

Sent: Friday, May 20, 2022 8:19 AM

To: BAWSCA2 <bawasca@bawasca.org>

Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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Sincerely,
Steve Bicknell
53 Oak Knoll ave
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Lourdes Enriquez

Subject: FW: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

From: Patricia Morton <pamorton@ix.netcom.com>

Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2022 7:35 PM

To: BAWSCA2 <bawscas@bawscas.org>

Subject: Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), please drop your lawsuit blocking environmental protections for the Bay

Dear Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency,

Dear BAWSCA Directors:

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ensure a reliable water supply, while supporting a healthy Tuolumne River and Bay-Delta.

Sincerely,
Patricia Morton
4400 Brunswick Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Christiane Barth

From: Nancy Arbuckle <crockerbuckle@mindspring.com>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 11:42 AM
To: BAWSCA2
Subject: copy of email sent to SFPUC -- for your records

To the SFPUC,

You are no doubt aware that by ensuring that most of the Sacramento—San Joaquin River Delta's precious water is used for industrial agriculture, you are essentially exporting our most prized and limited resource, water itself. The Chinese and other countries aren't buying alfalfa per se. They are buying the water used to grow it so they don't have to dam and destroy their own rivers and watersheds in service of low-value commodities. And by exporting almonds by the ton, you are not enriching the coffers of our state, you are impoverishing them. By your continued reluctance to ensure adequate flows in the Delta, your policies are actually systematically destroying the lifeblood of our state in the face of climate change. A few industrial agricultural companies make big returns, and the rest of us watch our salmon runs wither, our valleys become parched and our lakes dry up.

You have a role in this debacle. You can either facilitate it further or you can change your approach and adopt science-based standards that will ensure adequate flows in the Delta and save the most precious resource of all — our water and our watersheds. This ecological crisis is visible to us citizens. We expect you to address it.

Thank you.

Nancy Arbuckle
SF, CA

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Christiane Barth

From: LIBBY HIGGS <libbyhiggs9047@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 2:00 PM
To: commission@swater.org
Subject: La Times Article

I am so touched by the Commission's admission of guilt at the beginning of Tuesday meeting regarding their discrimination against the Winnemen Wintu tribe. Empty words do not change the fact that the discrimination continues to this day.

I strongly urge you to drop your lawsuit against the State Water Board and to vote yes on AB2639. We have seen our government at it's worst. It is past time to take action to save our rivers and delta. The Tuolumne and the bay delta are ours. It is our responsibility to be good stewards and care for our water ways. Sitting in an office massaging numbers to make them say what you want does not make you a good steward.

Thank you,

Libby Higgs

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From: [Christiane Barth](#)
To: [Nicole Sandkulla](#); [Lourdes Enriquez](#)
Subject: FW: Causes of the California drought
Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 9:02:19 AM

From: Mark Moulton <markmoulton12@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 8:56 AM
To: commissioners@sfwater.org
Cc: BAWSCA2 <bawzca@bawzca.org>; B Pierce <barbara@barbarapierce.org>
Subject: Causes of the California drought

Dear Commissioners,

Please adopt the Bay Delta Plan.

Thank you,

Mark

Please note the ideas and evidence from the LA Times story below. Let us heed the wise peoples who preceded us here and manage natural resources to support the web of life.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-26/california-delta-water-policy-tied-to-racist-past-tribes-say>

.....
Mark Moulton | 650.670.4069 cell/text
.....

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Delta water crisis linked to California's racist past, tribes and activists say

LA Times | May 26, 2022 | Ian James



A

Calleen Sisk, chief and spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, visits a creek near her home, a tributary of the Sacramento River where she recently saw salmon swimming. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

Tribes and environmental groups are challenging how the state manages water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, a major source for much of California, arguing the deterioration of the aquatic ecosystem has links to the state's troubled legacy of racism and oppression of Native people.

A group of activists and Indigenous leaders is demanding that the state review and update the water quality plan for the delta and San Francisco Bay, where fish species are suffering, algae blooms have worsened and climate change is adding to the stresses.

The tribes and environmental groups submitted a petition to the State Water Resources Control Board demanding the state change its approach and adopt science-based standards that ensure adequate flows in the delta to improve water quality and sustain imperiled fish, including species that are at risk of extinction.

They said the ecological crisis in the delta has its roots in California's history of violence against Native people, the taking of land from tribes and structural racism that shaped how the water

rights system was established more than a century ago. They said deteriorating conditions in the estuary represent a “continuation of California’s discriminatory water management history.”

They wrote in their 169-page petition that the state water board’s “failure to adopt sufficiently protective water quality standards entrenches a discriminatory system of water rights that was founded on the dispossession of Indigenous Californians and exclusion of communities of color, and that continues to prioritize large-scale agricultural interests over those of vulnerable Californians living in the Delta.”

The petition was filed Tuesday by the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Save California Salmon, Little Manila Rising and Restore the Delta, who are represented by a legal team from Stanford Law School’s Environmental Law Clinic.

The petitioners called for the state water board to carry out a review of the bay-delta water quality standards through a public process and to consult with tribes in updating the standards, while recognizing and incorporating tribal uses of water.

They said the state should adopt new water quality standards that ensure adequate flows in the delta. They urged the state water board to “regulate and restructure water rights as necessary,” including the most senior pre-1914 water rights, to implement the standards and to limit diversions and exports of water.

“Business as usual cannot continue. It’s not sustainable,” said Caleen Sisk, chief and spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe. “They need to rethink and redo. And do it better.”

For the Winnemem Wintu, whose ancestors were displaced by the construction of Shasta Dam, salmon are central to their cultural and spiritual traditions. But endangered winter-run Chinook salmon, which migrate through the delta, have suffered as years of drought and low reservoir levels have left the Sacramento River too warm for most of their offspring to survive.

Other threatened or endangered fish species include delta smelt, longfin smelt, spring-run Chinook, green sturgeon and Central Valley steelhead.

Sisk and others who signed the petition said the crisis in the delta has been “exacerbated through the construction and operation of large-scale delta water export projects to feed the growth of agricultural industries in arid areas to the south.”

Large quantities of water are diverted to supply vast farmlands growing almonds, pistachios, grapes, alfalfa and other crops. Water deliveries for agriculture have been cut back substantially during the drought, forcing growers to leave some lands dry or pump more groundwater.

But Sisk and others said the water system is structured in a way that continues to give preferential treatment to large agricultural interests that have senior water rights.

Some of the oldest rights date to the 1800s, when white settlers staked their claims, sometimes by nailing a notice to a tree.

Today, while many crops are exported in large quantities for profit, the water diversions are exacting a worsening environmental toll, Sisk said.

“How is it that Big Ag uses 80% of the water and then ships its products out of state or out of country, and uses all this water, and that the state is left with the deficit?” Sisk said. She said the current system is giving agriculture too much water, while not dedicating nearly enough for local communities, fish and the environment.

In March, Gov. Gavin Newsom’s administration announced a controversial \$2.6-billion deal with major water suppliers that they say would bolster the delta’s ecosystem. Under these proposed voluntary agreements, agencies that supply farms and cities would give up some water or secure additional supplies to help threatened species, while state, federal and local agencies would fund projects to improve habitat in the watershed.

The plan has been condemned by environmentalists as a set of backroom deals negotiated out of the public eye that wouldn’t provide nearly enough water for threatened fish or the overall health of the watershed.

Those who filed the petition said the proposed agreements, which have yet to be endorsed by the state water board, are the wrong approach. They said the tribes should have been consulted and the process should instead start with updating the water quality standards.

“That process is moving forward with a framework that is not protective of the delta,” said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of Restore the Delta. “And science already has shown that what the delta needs is more water moving through it.”

State data show that on average, about 47% of the state’s water goes to the environment, staying in rivers and wetlands. About 42% is used by agriculture, while 11% is used in cities and towns.

But the groups said in their petition that dams and water diversions have drastically reduced flows in the delta. On average, they said, about 31% of the watershed’s flow is diverted upstream from the delta, and the combined effect of these diversions and water exports cut average annual outflow from the delta by nearly half between 1986 and 2005.

“If nothing changes, the climate crisis will push these already tenuous conditions to the brink of disaster,” they said in the petition. “Without improved management, the results will include increasing salinity, proliferation of harmful algal blooms, spread of nonnative invasive species, decline of native fish species, and other harms to the estuarine ecosystem — all of which will do further violence to tribes and other vulnerable Delta communities.”

Elaine Labson, health equity director of Little Manila Rising, said people who immigrated to California during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines worked in the delta building levees and laboring in fields of asparagus, onions and potatoes. However, they didn't gain water rights.

"From 1913 to 1945, California's racist Alien Land Law prevented Filipinos from owning property, which is a prerequisite for acquiring water rights," Labson said in a statement.

Today, she said, the degraded state of delta waterways in and around Stockton poses health risks for residents. Labson noted that high nutrient levels and warm waters, resulting in part from low flows in the San Joaquin River, create conditions that allow harmful algal blooms.

She pointed out that last year the state water board adopted a racial equity resolution in which officials "acknowledged that the historical effects of institutional racism must be confronted throughout government." If this resolution is to have meaning, Labson said, the board "must take action to restore flows to the delta."

The state water board said officials will need to carefully evaluate the petition before responding.

"Updating the Bay-Delta Plan is one of the board's highest priorities," the agency said in a statement. "The board completed a significant update in 2018 for the Lower San Joaquin River tributaries and anticipates completing updates for the Sacramento River and Delta in the next two years."

It said this process will include an analysis of the proposed voluntary agreements, and the board will analyze the agreements "in conjunction with other alternatives for updating the Bay-Delta Plan."

Sydney Speizman, a student attorney with the Stanford Environmental Law Clinic who helped prepare the petition, said the board is supposed to update the plan and its water quality standards every three years, but it's been at least 16 years since that last happened.

"They've fallen woefully short of that duty with the standards that they have put forward," Speizman said. "The delta is in crisis, and climate change is pushing that to the brink. And the board, we're saying, needs to act upon its duties under the law to protect this ecosystem."

#

Lourdes Enriquez

From: Christiane Barth
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 1:21 PM
To: Nicole Sandkulla; Lourdes Enriquez
Subject: FW: Board communication

From: Chris Gilbert <chris@gilbertbiz.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 11:20 AM
To: commission@sfgwater.org
Cc: BAWSCA2 <bawsca@bawsca.org>
Subject: Board communication

SFPUC Board
Cc: BAWSCA

According to a recent LA Times article (<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-26/california-delta-water-policy-tied-to-racist-past-tribes-say>), California tribes are petitioning the State Water Board over past water “takings” and asking for more water to be left in the Delta and tributaries in part to restore their traditional food source of salmon. This is just more evidence that the way that California has been handling its water is problematic to say the least, and has been for a long time. With less water, that is not following its normal pattern, it is time to realize that we can’t keep fighting over a shrinking resource as the SFPUC & BAWSCA seem to be committed to. As with the Colorado, all parties must realize that certain uses must be prioritized over others. For California this means that the environment and necessary personal uses must come before excessive agricultural commerce in the Central Valley. Farmers like to say that they are “feeding the world”. It’s past time to realize that California with its dry, irrigation-requiring agricultural areas cannot feed the world. We must concentrate on feeding ourselves including providing necessary water for personal use and for the environment around us and that is California.

Stop any actions, including suits, that will hinder the State Water Board from carrying out its mandate to protect our natural resource, water.

Chris Gilbert

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From: [Christiane Barth](#)
To: [Nicole Sandkulla](#); [Lourdes Enriquez](#)
Subject: FW: Continued Water Issues
Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 8:26:06 AM

From: James Clarke <jamclarke@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 8:03 AM
To: commission@sflower.org
Cc: BAWSCA2 <bawsca@bawsca.org>
Subject: Continued Water Issues

I am writing to express my displeasure with the City of San Francisco's continued opposition to the Bay Delta Plan and its campaign of misinformation related to incorrect and unsubstantiated modeling regarding drought needs during sustained periods of insufficient rain. The City is again siding with those in Big Ag who are frightened that their senior water rights (gained during a period of rampant mistreatment of native peoples and non-white immigrants) will be limited in the future. The City must acknowledge that while it needs sufficient water to maintain its contractual obligations, it needs to address the numerous misdeeds done to Native peoples and those immigrant individuals who helped build the Delta Infrastructure. Due to Climate Change the health of the Bay & Delta is now being threatened by the greed of Big Ag and the City's own unwillingness to play its part in creating a sustainable water plan. Instead the City is acting without regard for anything other than its own political needs and its unfounded and exaggerated fears regarding its water rights.

If you have the courage, please read the following article which recently appeared in the LA Times - <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-26/california-delta-water-policy-tied-to-racist-past-tribes-say>

James Clarke (Native San Franciscan and current SF Homeowner)
36 Bronte St
San Francisco 94110

--

Jim

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Lourdes Enriquez

From: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 8:19 PM
To: Nicole Sandkulla; bawscaboardofdirectors; info@nccwd.com
Cc: Lourdes Enriquez
Subject: don't drag this out-- lawn be gone fail

agendize rule change asap. Maybe a special meeting? Why wait for the summer planting and work season to be over?

I do not know how many people have signed up for Lawn be gone. I don't know how many people have withdrawn because the Be gone terms where unacceptable.

Seems Bawsca should act quickly and open lawn be gone to widest audience.

Any delay means hundreds of thousand if not millions of gallons of water are wasted.

Bawsca should get its priorities straight; move Lawn Be Gone forward with no obstructions; let local cities and agencies make locally acceptable decisions. Save water quickly.

From: Nicole Sandkulla <NSandkulla@bawsca.org>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 2:04 PM
To: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>; bawscaboardofdirectors <bawscaboardofdirectors@bawsca.org>; info@nccwd.com <info@nccwd.com>
Cc: Lourdes Enriquez <LEnriquez@bawsca.org>
Subject: RE: item for next BAWSCA meeting agenda-- Fw: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

Thank you for your email. It will be shared with the Board of Directors as requested.

Regards,
Nicole

Nicole M. Sandkulla
Chief Executive Officer/General Manager
Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency
155 Bovet Road, Suite 650
San Mateo, CA 94402
Ph: (650) 349-3000
Cell: (650) 743-6688
EMail: NSandkulla@BAWSCA.org
Website: www.BAWSCA.org



From: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>

Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 10:40 AM

To: bawscaboardofdirectors <bawscaboardofdirectors@bawasca.org>; info@nccwd.com

Subject: item for next BAWSCA meeting agenda-- Fw: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

Unreasonable Bawasca lawn replacement terms adversely affect core water conservation mission.

I have become tangled up in a bawasca bureaucratic mission creep that hampers water conservation in a historic drought.

Unusual behavior for a conservation agency.

I raise these following points to be agendized at either the next policy meeting or full board. I will testify.

I desire to pull up my lawn, replace with crushed granite and gain a rebate. 100% water savings. Bawasca rules require 50% re-plant and I want 100% granite.

Bawasca has taken upon itself to over-rule homeowner preferences and impose the following:

Why is there a 50 Percent Plant Cover Rule? The primary goal of the Program is to reduce water use by removing water-thirsty lawns. However, this Program also encourages the use of water-efficient landscaping to maintain aesthetically pleasing and sustainable landscaping. Trees, shrubs and groundcovers provide shade, absorb carbon dioxide, supply oxygen, reduce soil erosion, give wildlife a home, decrease energy use, reduce storm water, and save water."

This is nonsense. My aesthetic, shade, wildlife population and oxygen generation are none of your business.

solution:

1. I am going to go 100% granite without Bawasca approval or rebate. But this rule will hamper people who need the rebate.

2. city of Pacifica has no prohibition.
3. Bawasca should repeal the 50% rule, make re-plant optional on applicant-- "legalize" granite
4. let applicant adhere to local front yard rules as set forth by local cities.
5. re-write all rebate terms and FAQs to reflect changes.

let me know on agenda item posting.

cheers/

mark stechbart
650-274-5193
mstechbart@msn.com

rom: info@nccwd.com <info@nccwd.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 2:09 PM
To: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

Hi Mark -

The program has always been organized and implemented regionally through BAWSCA. BAWSCA does set the program rules in coordination with the member agencies. The member agencies (such as NCCWD) participate in through a subscription program, where BAWSCA does most of the project coordination and NCCWD pays the rebate amount. BAWSCA does this for many of our water conservation programs and rebate programs. We do see a cost savings for our rebate programs by partnering together regionally through BAWSCA. BAWSCA also successfully applies for grants from the state for these programs, which benefits NCCWD and the rest of the region, by reducing the cost of these programs to our customers.

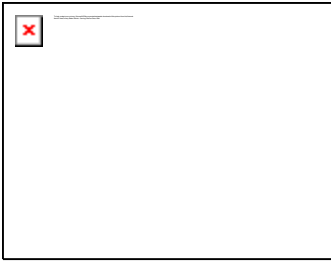
Some agencies, like Cal Water, have their own rebate programs, but I was just looking at their lawn replacement program, and the terms are similar, in that one must replace turf with drought tolerant plants.

<https://conservation.calwater.com/program/turf/terms>

Please let me know if you have more questions.

Best regards,
Adrienne

North Coast County Water District
2400 Francisco Boulevard
Pacifica, CA 94044
Tel: (650) 355-3462
Fax: (650) 355-0735
On the web at www.nccwd.com



From: mark stechbart <mstechbart@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 12:45:22 PM
To: info@nccwd.com
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

This is a bawsca regulation ?

Mark Stechbart
650.274.5193
Mstechbart@msn.com

From: info@nccwd.com <info@nccwd.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 11:47:58 AM
To: mark stechbart <MStechbart@msn.com>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

Good morning Mr. Stechbart,

Under the terms of the program that have been in place for years, a customer rebate is only provided if the customer is replacing their lawn with at least 50% plants.

From the FAQ on the BAWSCA website:

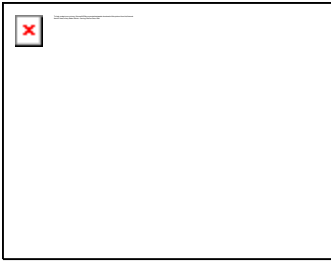
"

FAQ is here:

https://bawsca.org/uploads/userfiles/files/Updated_LBG_FAQs_2_15_22_FINAL.pdf

Very best regards,
Adrienne Carr
General Manager

North Coast County Water District
2400 Francisco Boulevard
Pacifica, CA 94044
Tel: (650) 355-3462
Fax: (650) 355-0735
On the web at www.nccwd.com



From: mark stechbart <MStechbart@msn.com>

Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 8:57 AM

To: NSandkulla@bawasca.org; info@nccwd.com

Subject: [EXTERNAL] lawn be gone fail

soo, I applied for a rebate yesterday to pull up 250 sf of front lawn in pacifica/NCCWD.

I want to replace the lawn with crushed granite. I find out my landscape taste is over-ruled by a Bawasca rule requiring a planting.

Kindly explain to me why BAWSCA would get into anyone's business about what is on their front yard when it is not a water issue? Bawasca is supposed to be in the water conserve biz and 100% granite is 100% zero water.

As things stand, my lawn stays in place. Maybe this meddling "rule" gets repealed?

Thoughts?

best/

mark stechbart

650-274-5193

mstechbart@msn.com

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NEWS RELEASE

SFPUC Contact:

John Côté

JCote@sfgwater.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2022

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Urges Customers to Reduce Outdoor Water Use

Agency takes action to enter level 2 of drought plan

San Francisco, CA – The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) moved today to further reduce systemwide water use to align with calls for conservation by Governor Gavin Newsom and the State Water Quality Control Board. In doing so, agency leaders emphasized that customers must reduce outdoor water use this summer to maintain water supplies. The SFPUC's action moves the agency into Level 2 of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan at an 11% systemwide use reduction, highlighting the continued need for water conservation throughout the Bay Area, particularly outdoor use. More than 2.7 million residents and businesses in Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco counties rely on the Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System for their drinking water.

"It's critical that all of our customers reduce outdoor water use this summer," SFPUC General Manager Dennis Herrera said. "Even though our customers are among the lowest water users in the state, we are in year three of a drought, and no one knows how long it will last. We must all take action to continue to ensure that we have sufficient water supplies."

The SFPUC declared a Water Shortage Emergency in November 2021, which included a call for a 10% reduction of water use among all SFPUC customers, both in San Francisco and in the wider Bay Area it serves. At that time, San Francisco highlighted continued conservation efforts, including permanent mandatory water waste restrictions, already in effect since the 2015 drought. The November action also enacted a temporary 5% drought surcharge on SFPUC retail customers, which took effect April 1, 2022.

Today, the SFPUC Commission adopted a systemwide water use reduction of 11% compared to baseline water use during Fiscal Year 2019-2020. The voluntary 11% reduction is associated with Shortage Level 2 of the agency's Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP), in alignment with State requirements. The reduction will be effective July 1, 2022.

The SFPUC and its regional customers continue to raise awareness about the drought and encourage water conservation. This continuing outreach campaign includes digital

advertisements on multiple channels in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog, electronic billboards along Bay Area Highways, SFMTA bus placards, bill inserts and newsletters, and collaborations with our Bay Area partners. Water use for irrigation typically increases during warm summer months. To meet our savings goals, reducing outdoor water use will be crucial this summer.

“The members of the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), representing water users in Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties under state law, supports the SFPUC'S request for further water use reductions and Governor Newsom's continuing water-conservation leadership in California,” said Nicole Sandkulla, BAWSCA CEO. “BAWSCA is committed to continued conservation to ensure preservation of the precious supply the Bay Area relies upon.”

The SFPUC provides free resources to its customers to reduce their water use, including free water wise evaluations indoors and outdoors; free water efficient fixtures such as faucet aerators and showerheads; and rebates on water efficient appliances. Learn more at sfpuc.org/savewater. Customers within the wholesale region can find water conservation resources at <https://bawasca.org/community/drought>.

About the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is a department of the City and County of San Francisco. It delivers drinking water to 2.7 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area, collects and treats wastewater for the City and County of San Francisco, and generates clean power for municipal buildings, residential customers, and businesses. Our mission is to provide our customers with high quality, efficient and reliable water, power, and sewer services in a manner that values environmental and community interests and sustains the resources entrusted to our care. Learn more at www.sfpuc.org.

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Press release from the coalition of Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Save California Salmon, Little Manila Rising, and Restore the Delta

Contact: Brian Smith, 415-320-9384, brian@bpspr.com

THIS JUST IN ... PRESS RELEASE: TRIBES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GROUPS LINK BAY-DELTA COLLAPSE TO WATER RIGHTS FROM CALIFORNIA'S RACIST PAST

Maven Breaking News | May 24, 2022

Today, a coalition of California Tribes and Delta-based environmental justice organizations (standing in front of the HQ of the California State Water Resources Control Board) announced the filing of a "Petition for Rulemaking Review."

The coalition, represented by the Environmental Law Clinic of Stanford Law, took this formal action today to demand the California State Water Resources Board update and enforce the Bay-Delta Plan as required by law.

The State Water Board and the Governor's Office have made numerous commitments to centering environmental justice, and tribal consultation in public decision-making. The California Legislature codified many of these commitments into law.

"This petition gives the Board an opportunity to make these promises real by updating Bay-Delta water quality standards through the robust, participatory public process required by law, centering the interests and participation of tribes and other impacted communities," said Stephanie L. Safdi, Environmental Law Clinic, Mills Legal Clinic, Stanford Law.

California History, Drought, and Estuary Collapse

This summer, California faces a third year of drought. Decisions made by state agencies are killing endangered and threatened native California fish species due to hot, dry rivers. In the Delta, communities face another year of harmful algal blooms filled with toxic cyanobacteria that threaten public health and safety and worsen already dangerous air quality conditions. The threats to tribal species, Tribal and public trust resources, and public health are rooted in a continuation of California's discriminatory water management history, from how water rights were established through the taking of tribal lands and the exclusion of communities of color from Delta access and decision-making.

From the petition...

As the State Water Board has acknowledged, “white supremacy led to the genocide and forced relocation of Native American people to facilitate white resettlement and the enslavement of Native American and Black people for white economic gain.” This state-sponsored dispossession and oppression went hand in hand with the development of the modern California water rights regime, which accorded legal water rights to white settlers claiming to put the water to its first beneficial use while divesting Indigenous People from prior rights to the water and excluding communities of color from access to water rights.

Demands

Under state and federal law, the State Water Resources Control Board is charged with maintaining water quality standards adequate to protect beneficial and public trust uses in the Bay-Delta and with regulating rights to use and divert Bay-Delta water to satisfy those standards. Pursuant to these authorities, the Board adopted a water quality control plan for the Bay-Delta, which it is statutorily obligated to review at least once every three years to determine whether an update is required to meet substantive water policy standards.

The Board is in clear violation of these mandatory duties. It has been over fifteen years since the Board last completed a comprehensive review of Bay-Delta water quality standards. And the steps it has taken toward doing so have been harmful half-measures. In lieu of an open, public process, the Board has prioritized closed-door negotiation of voluntary agreements with water districts, which fall well short of restoring sufficient Delta flows and alienate Delta communities of color and tribes most directly harmed by that shortfall. And it has largely eschewed meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected tribes despite its statutory obligations and its own commitments to centering this consultation in decision-making processes.

The Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Save California Salmon, Little Manila Rising, and Restore the Delta now bring this Petition for Rulemaking to urge the State Water Board to fulfill its duties by timely conducting a comprehensive review of Bay-Delta water quality standards through an open, public process. We petition the Board to engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected tribes in updating these standards. We petition the Board to recognize tribal beneficial uses in its update. And we petition the Board to adopt water quality standards adequate to protect all beneficial and public trust uses, and to regulate and restructure water rights as necessary to implement these standards.

What Happens Next?

With this step, the coalition exhausts administrative remedies. The State Water Board has 30 days to decide on how it treats this petition.

Coalition Member Statements:

Malissa Tayaba, Vice Chair, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians

Although the landscape and the waterways of our ancestral homelands have changed, we remain. We continue the seasonal gathering and the traditional teachings, we bring back the medicine, the ceremonies, and songs. We are the survivors of disease, colonization, genocide, and removal. We return to Pusune, Wallok, and other important village sites to remember, to reconnect, to teach, to learn, and to restore. We cannot do this work without healthy rivers – the lands, plants, fish, and animals that connect me and my Tribe to our ancestors and that are interwoven with my culture, religion, and identity cannot exist if there is not enough water in the Sacramento River and its tributaries to create the conditions needed to support life. If Delta water quality continues to deteriorate, I fear that the resources and landscapes with which we are working so hard to restore our connection will become increasingly unsuitable for use or disappear altogether. Such loss would amount to cultural genocide for our Tribe.

Sydney Speizman, Student Attorney, Stanford Environmental Law Clinic

We need to recognize that the Delta water extraction regime we have today has layers of injustice baked into it. California's water rights system was developed hand in hand with genocide and dispossession of Indigenous Californians and itself furthered the theft of their lands and water. And California law systematically excluded communities of color from access to water rights even as they built the state's infrastructure and its burgeoning agricultural industry through their ingenuity and their labor. The State Water Board has both the authority and the duty to stop perpetuating the ongoing cycle of harm to these communities that comes from excessive diversions of Delta waters.

Gary Mulcahy, Government Liaison, Winnemem Wintu Tribe

Water. Some call it a resource. Some call it an asset. Some call it a commodity. But no matter what some call it, Water is Life. All living things need water to survive. And when those responsible for regulating and protecting that water fail to do what they are entrusted to do, it is time to stand up and call them out. That is why we are here.

Gloria Alonso Cruz, Climate Water Advocate, Restore the Delta & Little Manila Rising

As a South Stockton resident and the daughter of immigrant Delta farmworkers, water pollution, harmful algal blooms filled with toxins, and lack of public access prevent my family from recreating in the Delta's waterways. We live surrounded by green water half the year that emits toxins that we end up breathing in. Adequate freshwater flows are needed in the Delta so we have enough clean, circulating, cool water to stop the spread of these toxins into our water and air. The State Water Board must take action to correct these conditions for me, my family, and our community. South Stockton's environmental justice community matters.

Morning Star Gali, Ajumawi band of the Pit River Tribe in Northeastern California, Save California Salmon

Tribes and native peoples that rely on salmon should have been invited to participate in the voluntary agreements, however, we were once again excluded. Many of the people that

obtained water rights through the attempted genocide of, and theft from, California Indian peoples once again did not consider us. Tribal peoples have supported the democratic and science-based Delta Plan updates that would provide more water for salmon in our rivers. Loss of salmon has created extreme health and cultural impacts on Native peoples who are supposed to be first in line for water rights. Truth and healing come through accountability and justice, not through exclusion.

Dillon Delvo, Executive Director, Little Manila

Here in Stockton California you either live in a 'Valley Town' or a 'Delta Town' and those of us who live on the Southside know we live in the valley town where there's no relationship to the rivers, sloughs and canals that surround our community. It's ironic because the waters of the Delta had everything to do with why our ancestors immigrated here for a better life. We came to work in the fields we helped reclaim from the wetlands that used to be the Delta, and yet today, none of our residents on the Southside have any meaningful relationship with the waters near our homes.

Elaine Barut-Labson, Health Equity Director, Little Manila Rising

I am a second-generation Filipino American, born and raised in Stockton, California, located in the Delta on the San Joaquin River. Our ancestors who immigrated to California during the U.S. colonial occupation of the Philippines, exchanged grueling labor in the Delta for low wages. They built levees, reclaimed lands, and helped grow crops like asparagus, potatoes, onions, lettuce. Yet our ancestors who were redlined away from land ownership in the Delta, and housing in North Stockton, did not share in the benefit of Delta waters. From 1913 to 1945, California's racist Alien Land Law prevented Filipinos from owning property, which is a prerequisite for acquiring water rights. The degraded state of Delta waterways in and around Stockton poses health risks for South Stockton residents. High nutrient levels coupled with warm water temperatures resulting in part from low flows in the San Joaquin River, create conditions that enable harmful algal blooms to thrive. This is why I, and my colleagues at Little Manila Rising, support the Petition for Rule Making for completion of the Bay-Delta Plan. If the State Water Board's equity resolution is to have meaning, then it must take action to restore flows to the Delta.

Kasil Willie, Staff Attorney, Save California Salmon

Many California tribes have supported the democratic and science-based Bay-Delta Plan updates that would provide more water for salmon. Salmon are a vital part of the culture of the California tribes whose traditional lands surround the waterways that salmon travel. The severe loss of salmon has had extreme health and cultural impacts on California's native peoples who have already suffered having their land and water rights taken from them through colonization. California's water rights system was meant to support miners and large landowners, not tribes. Now, voluntary agreements are threatening to further exclude the original water rights holders of the state, which means California tribes must fight harder for their water rights and for the rights of their salmon relatives.

Cintia Cortez, Climate Water Advocate, Restore the Delta

I am a South Stockton resident and recent graduate from the University of the Pacific. I will be transitioning into my first professional job in water quality work this summer. During warm weather months when school was in session, my friends and I would walk around Weber Point at the Stockton waterfront daily at lunchtime or after school, breathing in the smelly green fumes, unaware of how the health risks from these polluted waterways. Our South Stockton community didn't know that we had a right to be surrounded by clean water, or to catch healthy fish from our waterways. We didn't know that we have a right to access waterways because they are a public trust resource. We are doing our work in the community to learn and improve conditions. And we will insist that the State Water Resources Control Board does its job by completing and implementing the Bay-Delta Plan.

Alison Cooney, Student Attorney, Stanford Environmental Law Clinic

The State Water Board has clear duties under the law to responsibly manage Bay-Delta waters. It must review the Bay-Delta Plan every three years, and it must update the water quality standards in it to protect public trust resources, to prevent unreasonable water diversions, and to safeguard the full range of beneficial uses of Bay-Delta waters. The Board has fallen woefully short, and California tribes and environmental justice communities are bearing the brunt of its violations. We're petitioning the Board today to follow the law and fulfill its promises to center tribes and environmental justice communities in these policy processes.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director, Restore the Delta

A "voluntary" water management plan for Delta watershed flows that places the powerful in the driver's seat with government agencies is not rooted in equity. The only way to save and restore the Delta is for the creation and timely execution of a Bay-Delta Plan that will set measurable science-based water quality standards for Delta flows. The State Water Board has a legal duty to bring all parties to the table to work through the entire process, to be transparent, and to protect the most impacted parties, tribes and environmental justice communities, so as to achieve equity in California water management.

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Bill to accelerate Bay-Delta Plan defeated

Western Farm Press | June 1, 2022 | Tim Hearnden



The Sacramento River drains into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

A moderate Democrat in the California Assembly says he rounded up 44 votes to defeat a bill that would have accelerated an update of the Bay-Delta Plan, which governs water quality in the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

Assembly Bill 2639 by Assemblyman Bill Quirk, D-Hayward, would have required the plan to be implemented by December 2023, which could upend negotiations with water districts over voluntary agreements. It would also have prohibited the State Water Resources Control Board from issuing any new water right permits, putting in jeopardy needed new water storage projects like Sites Reservoir.

The bill was opposed by water and agricultural groups, and Assemblyman Adam Gray, D-Merced, called the proposal a "state water grab." He said he appealed to his colleagues on a personal level.

"There is no other region of the state that would be as heavily impacted by this bill as my district and the people I represent," Gray said. "I asked my colleagues to consider what they would ask of me if their districts were similarly targeted.

"I told the story of the decades-long fight my community has waged against the water grab, and how the State Water Board has decided that the impacts to our economy and our drinking water are 'significant, but unavoidable,'" he said. "I asked them if the Assembly was prepared to make the same decision."

Bay-Delta Plan update

The State Water Board has divided the current update of the Bay-Delta Plan into two phases -- the Sacramento River and its tributaries, and the San Joaquin River and its tributaries. Since passing minimum flows amendments for the San Joaquin River in 2018, the board has not taken steps to implement the plan because of negotiations over voluntary agreements, according to an Assembly bill analysis.

For the Sacramento River, a framework was adopted in July 2018 but no changes have yet been proposed because of similar talks on a voluntary pact with districts, the analysis explains. Environmental groups that favored AB 2639 argued it has been 27 years since the last Bay-Delta Plan update and demands on Delta water have continued to increase, bringing several fish species to the brink of extinction.

"Updates to the Bay-Delta (Plan) are urgently needed to protect California's drinking water, fish, and the watershed itself from worsening threats imposed by climate change," Quirk said, according to the bill analysis. He added work on the current update began in 2009.

The Association of California Water Agencies led opposition to Quirk's legislation, which would have cost the Water Board an additional \$1.4 million to hire five more workers to complete the plan by next year. Critics argued the timelines in this bill "would not be workable" and "the proposed prohibition on any new water right permits...would have profound negative impacts on water management and work against California becoming climate resilient," the analysis stated.

The bill passed the Assembly's Water, Parks and Wildlife, Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, and Appropriations committees before failing on the floor. Democrats hold supermajorities in the California Legislature, but 44 Assembly members either abstained or voted no in the floor vote, denying it the 41 votes it needed to pass. Gray had proposed amendments, including one aimed at protecting drinking water in the San Joaquin Valley's poorest areas, but Quirk and allies called for a vote without changes.

A 'broad coalition'

"It took a broad coalition to defeat the bill," Gray said after the May 26 vote. "The San Joaquin Valley doesn't always have enough friends in the State Legislature to stop bad bills, but we did today. I am grateful to my colleagues who took the time to understand a complicated issue. They made the difference today."

Gray has been critical of California water policy. Earlier this spring, he called for an investigation into the state Department of Water Resources for its handling of spring runoff in 2021, arguing the agency was caught flatfooted as warm spring temperatures created a rapid snowmelt and sent more water downstream to the Pacific Ocean.

#

Weather's unwanted guest: Nasty La Nina keeps popping up

CBS Bay Area | May 28, 2022 | Associated Press

Something weird is up with La Nina, the natural but potent weather event linked to more drought and wildfires in the western United States and more Atlantic hurricanes. It's becoming the nation's unwanted weather guest and meteorologists said the West's megadrought won't go away until La Nina does.

The current double-dip La Nina set a record for strength last month and is forecast to likely be around for a rare but not quite unprecedented third straight winter. And it's not just this one. Scientists are noticing that in the past 25 years the world seems to be getting more La Ninas than it used to and that is just the opposite of what their best computer model simulations say should be happening with human-caused climate change.

"They (La Ninas) don't know when to leave," said Michelle L'Heureux, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecast office for La Nina and its more famous flip side, El Nino.

An Associated Press statistical analysis of winter La Ninas show that they used to happen about 28% of the time from 1950 to 1999, but in the past 25 winters, they've been brewing nearly half the time. There's a small chance that this effect could be random, but if the La Nina sticks around this winter, as forecast, that would push the trend over the statistically significant line, which is key in science, said L'Heureux. Her own analysis shows that La Nina-like conditions are occurring more often in the last 40 years. Other new studies are showing similar patterns.

What's bothering many scientists is that their go-to climate simulation models that tend to get conditions right over the rest of the globe predict more El Ninos, not La Ninas, and that's causing contention in the climate community about what to believe, according to Columbia University climate scientist Richard Seager and MIT hurricane scientist Kerry Emanuel.

Fire season preps: weed abatement deadline arrives in Contra Costa County

What Seager and other scientists said is happening is that the eastern equatorial Atlantic is not warming as fast as the western equatorial Atlantic or even the rest of the world with climate change. And it's not the amount of warming that matters but the difference between the west and east. The more the difference, the more likely a La Nina, the less the difference, the more likely an El Nino. Scientists speculate it could be related to another natural cycle, called the Pacific Decadal Oscillation, or it could be caused by human-caused climate change or both.

"At this point we just don't know," L'Heureux said. "Scientists are watching and I know, are actively studying. But it's really important because of regional conditions. We need to get this right."

La Nina is a natural and cyclical cooling of parts of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather patterns worldwide, as opposed to El Nino's warming. Often leading to more Atlantic hurricanes,

less rain and more wildfires in the West and agricultural losses in the middle of the country, studies have shown La Nina is more expensive to the United States than the El Nino. Together El Nino, La Nina and the neutral condition are called ENSO, which stands for El Nino Southern Oscillation, and they have one of the largest natural effects on climate, at times augmenting and other times dampening the big effects of human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas, scientists said.

"They really have a very, very strong" effect, said research scientist Azhar Ehsan, who heads Columbia University's El Nino/La Nina forecasting. "So a third consecutive La Nina is not at all a welcome thing."

He said the dangerous heat in India and Pakistan this month and in April is connected to La Nina.

The current La Nina formed in the late summer of 2020 when the Atlantic set a record for the number of named storms. It strengthened in the winter when the West's drought worsened and in the early summer of 2021 it weakened enough that NOAA said conditions were neutral. But that pause only lasted a few months and by early fall 2021 La Nina was back, making it a double dip.

Normally second years of La Nina tend to be weaker, but in April this La Nina surprised meteorologists by setting a record for intensity in April, which is based on sea surface temperatures, Ehsan said.

"These are very impressive values for April," L'Heureux said. Still, because La Ninas historically weaken over summer and there are slight signs that this one may be easing a bit, there's the small but increasing chance that this La Nina could warm just enough to be considered neutral in late summer.

La Nina has its biggest effect in the winter and that's when it is a problem for the West because it's the rainy season that is supposed to recharge areas reservoirs. But the West is in a 22-year megadrought, about the same time period of increasing La Nina frequency.

Three factors — ENSO, climate change and randomness — are biggest when it comes to the drought, which is itself a huge trigger for massive wildfires, said UCLA climate scientist Daniel Swain. Without climate change, La Nina and bad luck could have made the drought the worst in 300 years but with climate change it's the worst in at least 1,200 years, said UCLA climate hydrologist Park Williams.

La Nina "is a pretty important player; it may be the dominant player," said Swain, who has a blog on Western weather. "It could be responsible for one-third, maybe one-half of the given conditions if it is pronounced enough."

"It's much less likely that the Southwest will see at least even a partial recovery from the megadrought during La Nina," Swain said.

La Nina "amps up your Atlantic storms" but decreases them in the Pacific, said Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

It's all about winds 6 to 7 miles (10 to 12 kilometers) above the water surface. One of the key factors in storm development is whether there is wind shear, which are changes in wind from high to low elevations. Wind shear can decapitate or tip over hurricanes, making them hard to strengthen and at times even stick around. Wind shear can also let dry air into hurricanes that chokes them.

When there's an El Nino, there's lots of Atlantic wind shear and it's hard for hurricanes to get going. But La Nina means little wind shear in the Atlantic, making it easier for storms to intensify and do it quickly, said University of Albany hurricane researcher Kristen Corbosiero.

"That's a really huge factor," Corbosiero said.

"Whatever is the cause, the increasing incidence of La Ninas may be behind the increasing hurricanes," MIT's Emanuel said.

Some areas like eastern Australia and the arid Sahel region of Africa do better with more rain during La Nina. India and Pakistan, even though they get extra spring heat, also receive more needed rain in La Ninas, Columbia's Ehsan said.

A 1999 economic study found that drought from La Nina cost the United States agriculture between \$2.2 billion to \$6.5 billion, which is far more than the \$1.5 billion cost of El Nino. A neutral ENSO is best for agriculture.

Columbia's Seager said even though there may be some chance and some natural cycles behind the changes in La Nina, because there's likely a climate change factor he thinks there will probably be more of them.

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Urban water use is latest target for drought cutbacks

Ag Alert | June 1, 2022 | Peter Hecht

With farmers across California already facing severe cuts in irrigation supplies, state officials are now imposing additional aggressive conservation measures for urban consumers and local water agencies across the state.

Emergency regulations, adopted May 24 by the California State Water Resources Control Board, are now targeting California cities and communities and the state's nonagricultural landscapes.

The regulations will require local agencies to impose restrictions on water use that can be sufficient to make up for potential 20% shortfalls in water supplies anticipated for summer months.

That means no irrigation for municipal greenbelts. Watering lawns and turf at commercial or industrial buildings is now banned, meaning that lush green spaces at the Golden State's popular tourist hotels or sprawling business parks will have to go brown.

California homeowners still watering their tropical landscaping and ornamental plants may run into trouble from their local water districts and face potential fines.

"It means that we're all in this together," said California Farm Bureau Senior Counsel Chris Scheuring, who specializes in water issues. "Urban conservation is a different species of conservation than agricultural conservation. In some cases, it is a little easier for urban folks to cut back, maybe even drastically, without affecting their lifestyles and livelihoods."

Gov. Gavin Newsom applauded the actions by state water officials.

"California is facing a drought crisis, and every local water agency and Californian needs to step up on conservation efforts," Newsom said in a statement. "I am hopeful the measures enacted by the State Water Board will lead to a reduction of water use across the state. These conservation measures are increasingly important as we enter the summer months. I'm asking all Californians to step up, because every single drop counts."

Water board Chairman E. Joaquin Esquivel echoed the governor, saying, "The severity of this drought requires all Californians to save water in every possible way."

Esquivel said the regulations approved by the board "compels water systems and local authorities to implement a range of additional critical conservation measures as we enter the hot and dry summer months."

Mired in its third consecutive year of drought, California just had its driest recorded January, February and March, after early-winter storms had provided a false promise of a better water year.

"Farmers are accustomed to empty irrigation ditches in very dry years, and that is what we have this year," Scheuring said.

Those ditches may be getting progressively drier.

In February, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced for the second year in a row that thousands of California farmers and ranchers would get no water deliveries from the Central Valley Project.

In March, the California Department of Water Resources cut its water allocation for the State Water Project to 5%—down from its earlier promised allotment of 15%.

As conditions grew worse, the state Division of Water Rights warned last month that farmers, ranchers and other water-rights holders can expect additional cuts in irrigation supplies in June and July.

Water-rights holders in numerous California watersheds—including the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the Scott River and Shasta River, and the Russian River—would be additionally impacted if deeper cuts are ordered.

Farm fields are being fallowed. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that California rice acreage will drop to 348,000 this year, the lowest level since 1983-84. A University of California research report said the drought idled 395,000 acres of farmland of all kinds in 2021, including 385,000 acres in the Central Valley. "When you cut back on agricultural water use, you directly hurt production," Scheuring said.

In cities and communities, the state water board regulations will continue to allow watering of turf used for recreation, including at schools and parks. Watering is also permitted to maintain community and residential trees.

The fine for watering of unpermitted lawns—called "nonfunctional turf"—is an infraction. Violations are subject to fines of as much as \$500 per day, under the water board regulations.

The board's call for local water agencies to impose significant conservation measures came in response to data showing that many Californians are doing very little to conserve.

In fact, the water board said, the state's urban retail water suppliers reported average water use statewide that was nearly 19% greater this March than in March of 2020.

With most state reservoirs shrinking, Californians' lack of water conservation cut into California's meager water savings by another 3.7%, the water board reported.

As a result, the water board announced, it is instructing local agencies to accelerate contingency planning and water-demand assessments for extended dry conditions.

The local water providers were also urged to consider additional steps. Those include enforcing prohibitions on water use, increasing patrols to identify water waste, limiting outdoor irrigation to certain days or hours, and educating the public on the importance of conservation.

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As drought persists, water rights on agenda

Cal Matters | May 29, 2022 | Dan Walters



Sprinklers water a lawn in Sacramento on July 15, 2014, during the last drought. Photo by Rich Pedroncelli, AP Photo

As a third year of drought continues, California officialdom is increasing pressure for more water conservation.

Last week, the state Water Resources Control Board imposed a statewide ban on watering of “non-functional” turf, such as grass around commercial buildings, and directed local water agencies to implement water use restrictions.

“California is facing a drought crisis and every local water agency and Californian needs to step up on conservation efforts,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a supportive statement.

Despite the official ballyhoo, last week’s actions were tepid at best, stopping well short of the mandatory reductions that Newsom’s predecessor, Jerry Brown, imposed during a previous drought.

It appears that Newsom, running for re-election, does not want to be the guy who tells Californians they can’t water their lawns as much as they would like. He’d rather leave it to local water officials to crack down.

However, no matter how they are framed, the new directives are highly unlikely to have more than a marginal impact on California's increasingly dire water shortage for the simple reason that residential use is a relatively tiny factor in the water equation. California's largest-in-the-nation agricultural industry is by far the largest user of developed and managed water supplies.

The larger question is whether the state is doing anything to confront the longer-term gap between water supply and water demand as climate change alters precipitation patterns. Conservation will help, particularly more efficient use of agricultural water, but we need more storage, such as the long-delayed Sites Reservoir, to take advantage of wet years.

Newsom's latest budget proposal claims to make big investments in improving water security, but most of the money would go to small-scale projects that tinker on the margins. It proposes just a half-billion additional dollars for water storage while dumping several billion more dollars into the state's ill-conceived and ill-managed bullet train project.

If we're serious about dealing with semi-permanent drought conditions, the most important — and the most controversial — step would be to reconsider how limited supplies are allocated among agriculture, urban users and flows needed to support endangered species such as salmon.

By necessity, such a comprehensive approach — more or less starting with a clean sheet of paper — would require a fresh look at the state's bewilderingly complex water rights.

Those who hold such rights consider them to be sacrosanct. But drought is so severe that even senior rights holders are feeling the pinch, as CalMatters writer Rachel Becker details in a recent article on drought's impacts in the Sacramento Valley.

Reconsideration of water rights seems to be gaining momentum in water policy circles.

A water policy paper issued by the state Senate leadership this month proposes that the state purchase rights from agricultural holders to provide more water for habitat improvement as part of a \$7.5 billion plan "to build a climate resilient water system."

As the state water board was pushing for more conservation last week, a coalition of Indian tribes and environmental groups demanded that it become more aggressive about enforcing water quality standards in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta "and restructure water rights as necessary to implement these standards."

The demand cites the history of white settlers appropriating water supplies from native peoples in the 19th century and suggests that water rights can be reconfigured under the state constitution's provision that only "reasonable use" of water is legal.

The water board had been considering such direct action, but put it on hold while the Newsom administration has attempted to forge so-called “voluntary agreements” that would divert more water from agriculture to enhance river flows.

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Dan Walters

dan@calmatters.org

Dan Walters has been a journalist for more than 60 years, spending all but a few of those years working for California newspapers. He began his professional career in 1960, at age 16, at the Humboldt Times... More by Dan Walters

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California orders water suppliers to mandate restrictions. Here's how much further they could go

State is one step closer to imposing mandatory water restrictions after residents have largely shrugged off Newsom's pleas to voluntarily reduce their consumption

San Francisco Chronicle | May 24, 2022 | Dustin Gardiner



In this May 22, 2021, file photo, water drips from a faucet near boat docks sitting on dry land at the Browns Ravine Cove area of drought-stricken Folsom Lake in Folsom, Calif. The State Water Resources Control Board voted Tuesday to prohibit businesses and public institutions from irrigating grass or “non-functional” turf that serves only an ornamental purpose. Josh Edelson/Associated Press

California's urban water suppliers must impose restrictions on usage after residents across the state have largely shrugged off Gov. Gavin Newsom's pleas to voluntarily reduce consumption as the state plunges into another year of drought.

But the state is still miles away from mandating the more stringent conservation orders that helped California through the toughest years of its last major drought.

The State Water Resources Control Board voted unanimously Tuesday to tell California water suppliers to make restrictions to prepare for the likelihood that their allocations could be cut by up to 20% — a reduction still less than the amount of water that residents were asked to conserve during the drought that spanned from 2011 to early 2017.

In addition, the Water Board also voted to prohibit businesses and public institutions from using potable water to irrigate grass or “non-functional” turf that only serves an ornamental purpose. The ban would not apply to residential households or irrigation needed to keep trees and other landscaping alive, nor to grass that serves a recreational purpose, such as school fields or parks.

The measures are effectively a warning bell for Californians to cut back or face more drastic mandates limiting their water consumption.

California could go much further with conservation mandates, if recent history is a guide. In 2015, then-Gov. Jerry Brown ordered cities and towns to cut water consumption a cumulative 25% statewide. Each community was given a quota, based largely on its past record of savings.

Brown also imposed a host of more specific measures. His administration required restaurants to ask customers if they want a glass of water before serving it, blocked HOAs from fining residents for not watering their grass, prohibited homeowners from hosing down their driveways and banned lawn watering within 48 hours of rainfall.

Newsom’s approach to drought has so far been less aggressive, to the chagrin of some state legislators, environmentalists and farmers who want the state to conserve more now.

His administration has previously suggested it’s taking a more tailored approach by requiring local water suppliers to decide how best to conserve. The governor has proclaimed a drought emergency in all of the state’s 58 counties.

Last July, Newsom asked residents to voluntarily reduce the amount of water they use by 15%; residents have conserved less than 4% since he made his request. Moreover, water usage has actually increased in recent months — jumping 19% in March compared with the same month in 2020 — as the state saw little spring rainfall.

The Water Board did, however, vote to impose some minimal restrictions in January: no hosing down driveways, filling up decorative fountains or watering lawns within 48 hours of rainfall. A violation of these rules carries the threat of a \$500-a-day fine from local water agencies.

While the state’s approach has been more hands-off than the last drought, Newsom warned on Monday that more sweeping cutbacks could be around the corner if urgent action isn’t taken.

“Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures,” he said in a statement after meeting with local water officials. “We all have to be more thoughtful about how to make every drop count.”

Newsom has resisted statewide mandates, in part, because he said California’s vast geography and the unique conditions impacting different watersheds make a “one-size fits all” approach

impractical. He instead pushed for local water agencies to impose restrictions and asked residents to voluntarily cut back.

But the governor's warning this week suggests his administration and the Water Board have become exasperated that the approach hasn't yielded more reductions in water usage.

"We are in this unprecedented drought — we need to act like it," said Laurel Firestone, a board member and environmental attorney. "We need to be making sure that all hands are on deck."

California is in third year of an exceptional drought that has dried up lakes and streams and exacerbated wildfire-prone conditions. After an unusually wet December, severe drought conditions swiftly returned to the state and high temperatures melted snowpack in the Sierras unseasonably early. The first three months of this year were the driest on record for California, according to the state.

But only about half of Californians are currently subjected to water restrictions, which come from their local agencies. The Water Board could ensure that every city will be part of a conservation plan.

The Water Board's action directs suppliers to move to "Level 2" of their water shortage contingency plans. Level 2 is intended to prepare the agencies for a water shortage of up to 20%. The strategies for achieving those savings vary by supplier but typically involve modest water-conservation measures, such as limits on outdoor watering.

A handful of water suppliers across the state, such as Santa Cruz, will likely be exempt from the requirement because they have already achieved a high level of conservation, with residential customers using less than 55 gallons of water per person per day. None of the state's largest suppliers would qualify. The exemption would exclude cities that are dependent on over-drafted water sources, such as the ailing Colorado River or shrinking aquifers, for their supply.

The resolution the Water Board approved also requires the state to work with suppliers to make sure that restrictions on outdoor watering don't harm the urban tree canopy in their area.

Newsom's administration has offered residents tips to help conserve: water lawns and landscaping less often (outdoor irrigation is the biggest source of usage in major cities), take shorter showers and wait until dishwashers and washing machines are full before running a load. The state also has a website to anonymously report water waste: savewater.ca.gov

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California drought: Water wasters could face fines of up to \$10,000 in Santa Clara County under new rules

“Water cops” coming to Silicon Valley, but are there enough on the beat?

Mercury News | May 24, 2022 | Paul Rogers



As California's drought continues into its third summer, San Luis Reservoir, one of the state's largest, was 46% full on Wednesday May 11, 2022, with most of its boat ramp at Dinosaur Point high and dry. The reservoir is located between Gilroy and Los Banos, and is a key water supply for Silicon Valley, Central Valley farms and Southern California cities. (Photo: Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group)

Residents in Santa Clara County could face fines of up to \$500 — and in extreme cases, \$10,000 — for wasting water, under new drought rules approved Tuesday afternoon that are among the toughest of any urban area in California.

Citing the worsening drought, dwindling local water supplies and residents' failure to hit conservation targets, the board of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, a government agency based in San Jose that serves as the wholesale water provider to 2 million residents, voted unanimously to set up an enforcement program to warn, and then fine, property owners who are violating outdoor watering rules.

“This is a direction we have never taken in our history,” said Rick Callender, CEO of the district. “But never in history have our conditions been as dire as they are now.”

The new rules take effect June 1, but depend largely on citizen complaints and very few “water cops” to investigate them.

Under the rules, residents who see water being wasted can notify the district of the address and date of incident by calling 408-630-2000, or emailing WaterWise@valleywater.org, or reporting online at www.valleywater.org/droughtsaving-water/report-water-waste.

Common violations include homeowners or businesses who water lawns more than twice a week, who water between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. when evaporation is highest, and who irrigate so much that water flows into the sidewalk or street.

On a first violation, the district will send the property owner a letter. If there is another violation two weeks or more later, after the property owner has had time to correct the problem, the district will send out a staff member to discuss the case with the resident, or leave a door hanger about the rules and fines.

On the third violation, the district can issue a fine of \$100, followed by \$250 for the fourth and \$500 for the fifth.

In extreme cases, such as where a property owner is dramatically overwatering and openly refusing to follow the rules, the district has the ability to issue a fine of \$10,000, with \$500 per day penalties until the violation is corrected.

The new plan is not without its challenges, however.

Asked how many “water cops,” or staff members, would be assigned to enforcement, the district said Tuesday it has just three for the entire county, the sixth most populous out of California’s 58 counties. District Spokesman Matt Keller said the agency will hire more “if demand makes it necessary.”

“It’s a token,” said Jay Lund, co-director of the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences. “You aren’t going to be reducing water use by enforcement with three people, but by the news of enforcement.”

Also, as part of the plan, the water district will provide the information on violators to 13 cities and private water companies, called retailers, to whom it sells water, so they can help enforce the rules. The retailers send water bills to property owners.

But the largest water retailer in the county, the San Jose Water Company, a private corporation that serves 1 million residents in and around San Jose, said it has no plans to fine anyone. Also, it said it will not share information it receives from the public about water wasters, with the district.

“We do not provide private information on any of our customers to any outside agency,” said San Jose Water Company spokeswoman Sharon Whaley.

Several of the district’s board members on Tuesday suggested that the district make public a list of the biggest water wasters in the county each month, the way that the East Bay Municipal Utility District has done in prior droughts, and plans to do this summer.

When board member Linda LeZotte asked about that, the Santa Clara Valley Water District staff told her that the district doesn’t have that information because it is the wholesaler, not the retail provider. LeZotte said the staff should look into getting that data, since San Jose Water Company declines to make it public.

“If they aren’t willing to do it because they are worried about profits, or whatever, we’ll do it.” LeZotte said.

During the last drought, former San Francisco Giants pitcher Matt Cain, former Safeway Chief Executive Officer Steven Burd, developer Tom Seeno and former Golden State Warrior Adonal Foyle were found in the East Bay to be using thousands of gallons a day at their homes, mostly on massive lawns, and cut use after the embarrassment of being held publicly accountable.

Lund said that Gov. Gavin Newsom could issue an executive order requiring all urban water agencies to make public the list of the 5% of biggest water users every month. Or, he added, the Santa Clara Valley Water District could go to the state Public Utilities Commission and ask it to order San Jose Water Company to provide the district with the information.

“They could say, we need this to increase conservation during a drought emergency,” Lund said.

The problem in Santa Clara County is that the water district’s 10 reservoirs are just 23% full. The district is working to purchase water from Sacramento Valley farmers with senior water rights, as it did last year. But less is available due to the state entering its third summer of drought. Local groundwater supplies are making up the difference, but by next year those could be dangerously low at current pumping levels.

Last June, the district asked all Santa Clara County residents to reduce water use 15% compared to 2019 levels. But since then, they have only cut by 9%, and water use actually increased during the extremely dry months of January, February and March when rains were scarce and homeowners turned up their lawn sprinklers.

“We are in a water crisis,” said John Varela, acting chairman of the district’s board. “Every single one of us. All 2 million people in this county need to adjust your daily water use to improve conservation so we will have water in the future.”

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California bans watering of 'non functional' lawns around businesses as drought persists

Sacramento Bee | May 24, 2022 | Ryan Sabalow

Californians can expect to see more yellow grass around hospitals, hotels, office parks and industrial centers after water regulators voted Tuesday to ban watering of “nonfunctional” turf in commercial areas.

The State Water Resources Control Board also moved to order all the state’s major urban water providers to step up their conservation efforts.

The moves are the strongest regulatory actions state officials have taken in the third year of the latest drought. They come a day after Gov. Gavin Newsom warned urban water providers that mandatory cuts could be coming unless Californians do more to conserve. So far, Californians have failed to cut their urban water use as much as they did during the last drought that ended in 2017.

“There is a sense of urgency here,” Water Board Chairman Joaquin Esquivel said before Tuesday’s vote.

Parks, sports fields, golf courses, residential lawns and other areas where people regularly gather aren’t covered under the rules the board approved Tuesday. The restrictions only prohibit potable water being applied to “nonfunctional” turf around the state’s “commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors.” The ban also doesn’t prohibit Californians from watering trees, which help cool urban areas.

Outdoor watering of lawns and landscaping accounts for the bulk of California’s urban water use. Banning decorative lawns would save enough water to supply 780,000 households each year, according to the governor’s office.

The other portion of the regulations the water board approved on Tuesday requires nearly all of the state’s local water districts to move to the “Level 2” tier in their drought response plans or reduce watering to no more than two days a week. After the last drought ended, California required the state’s urban water suppliers to come up with plans that have six levels of conservation, based on how much water they have available.

Newsom had already asked water providers to move to Level 2, which assumes that each district is facing up to a 20% cut to their supply. Before Tuesday’s vote, only about half of the state’s population was under a water district that had moved to Level 2.

WATER PROVIDERS PUSH BACK

Esquivel, the board chairman, said the rules approved Tuesday were necessary to save water this year as California’s blistering summer months take hold and to ensure there’s enough water statewide if the drought continues into a fourth dry season.

“It’s hard for anyone in the state to ... say, ‘We’re good,’ ” Esquivel said.

But several water providers told the board just that, as they argued against a one-size-fits-all regulatory approach.

“We have no shortage because we have done what the state has asked,” said Stacy Taylor of the Mesa Water District in Southern California.

Taylor spoke on behalf of the nearly ⅓ of urban water providers in California that she said have “no water shortage now, nor in the anticipated future.”

Taylor and several other local water district officials testified they’ve already asked customers to cut back substantially over the decades. They’ve also spent millions of their ratepayers’ dollars on finding new water sources. They argued the moves left them well prepared for this drought.

For instance, the San Juan Water District, serving wealthy Granite Bay, and other Sacramento-area water districts have enough groundwater reserves that they’re going to send some this summer to other regions in the state that “desperately need” it, said Paul Helliker, the district’s general manager.

Environmentalists, however, argue all Californians should be required to cut their use if the water board wants to make good on its slogan, “Conservation is a way of life.”

“It’s time to actually, if not kill our lawns, reduce the impact of inappropriate landscaping in the state as we get drier and drier,” said Conner Everts, a board member at the Water Impact Network, an environmental group.

The board, however, acknowledged that some water providers are in better shape than others. The rules approved Tuesday give some leeway in moving to Level 2 to a handful of damp coastal areas such as the city of Santa Cruz, whose residents don’t use very much water and that have ample local supplies.

Meanwhile, the state’s sprawling agricultural industry, which uses substantially more water than urban areas do, already has seen dramatic cuts to its water supplies.

SACRAMENTO WILL SEE FEW CHANGES

The board’s move came a day after Newsom met with a group of the state’s urban water suppliers in Sacramento and warned them he would issue mandatory cutbacks if the districts’ customers didn’t cut their use.

So far, Newsom has been trying a locally-driven approach to conservation. Newsom stopped short of imposing mandatory cuts like his predecessor, Jerry Brown, did during the last drought. Brown ordered all Californians to cut their water use by 25%.

Newsom in July called on Californians to voluntarily reduce water use by 15%, but per-capita urban consumption continues to rise. State figures show that Californians’ water use grew 7% in March compared to a year earlier, and was up 18.9% when compared to March 2020.

On Monday, Newsom told water providers that wasn’t good enough.

“Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures,” Newsom said in a written statement after the meeting. “We all have to be more thoughtful about how to make every drop count.”

Still, many of the state’s largest water providers already have moved to cut water use.

For instance, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, a water wholesaler that supplies water to 19 million people across six Southern California counties, took the unprecedented step last month to limit outdoor watering to one day a week.

In the Sacramento region, many districts won't notice the Level 2 restrictions too much. Sacramento's city council voted in August to put Sacramento under a "water alert," the city's term for a Level 2 water shortage and to limit watering to two days a week.

Two of the largest water districts in Sacramento County — the Sacramento County Water Agency and the Elk Grove Water Service — have conservation frameworks identical to Sacramento, and have already entered Level 2 shortage restrictions.

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Newsom says California could get mandatory water restrictions as drought crisis deepens

San Francisco Chronicle | May 23, 2022 | Kate Galbraith



Gov. Gavin Newsom says worsening California drought could call for mandatory water restrictions. Kids play on puddles left on an exposed lakebed at Kings Beach (Placer County) amid the worsening drought. Max Whittaker / Special to The Chronicle 2021

Gov. Gavin Newsom warned Monday that California could see mandatory water restrictions if significant cutbacks in water usage are not made by summer.

Last July, Newsom called for a 15% reduction in the amount of water Californians use. But the state has come nowhere near to meeting that target — savings are at less than 4% since Newsom issued the request.

And usage has crept up during the spring months, when little rain fell. In March, for example, statewide water usage increased by nearly 19% compared with the same month in 2020.

“Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures,” Newsom said in a statement that followed a meeting with local and regional water officials.

The multi-year drought has dried up streams and lakes, harmed wildlife, sent wildfire risk soaring and caused many local water agencies across the state to restrict lawn watering.

On Tuesday, the State Water Resources Control Board will vote on whether to ban watering of “non-functional turf” outside of commercial and industrial buildings across California.

The board is also likely to tell California water suppliers to be prepared for the possibility that their water allocations will be 20% lower than normal.

At the moment, only about half of Californians are subjected to water restrictions, which come from their local agencies. But the water board could ensure that every city will be part of a plan for less usage.

The state is urging Californians to reduce their outdoor watering, which is the biggest source of usage in major cities. Shorter showers, washing full loads of laundry (rather than partial loads), using a broom rather than a hose for outdoor cleaning, and other water-saving measures are also encouraged.

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Kate Galbraith is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: kgalbraith@sfchronicle.com
Twitter: @kategalbraith

‘Everyone loses’: Sacramento Valley struggles to survive unprecedented water cuts

CalMatters | May 23, 2022 | Rachel Becker



The drought has stunted grasses that Josh Davy's cattle usually feed on so he prepares hay for them at his ranch near Red Bluff. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Standing on the grassy plateau where water is piped onto his property, Josh Davy wished his feet were wet and his irrigation ditch full.

Three years ago, when he sank everything he had into 66 acres of irrigated pasture in Shasta County, Davy thought he'd drought-proofed his cattle operation.

He'd been banking on the Sacramento Valley's water supply, which was guaranteed even during the deepest of droughts almost 60 years ago, when irrigation districts up and down the valley cut a deal with the federal government. Buying this land was his insurance against droughts expected to intensify with climate change.

But this spring, for the first time ever, no water is flowing through his pipes and canals or those of his neighbors: The district won't be delivering any water to Davy or any of its roughly 800 other customers.

Without rain for rangeland grass where his cows forage in the winter, or water to irrigate his pasture, he will probably have to sell at least half the cows he's raised for breeding and sell all

of his calves a season early. Davy expects to lose money this year — more than \$120,000, he guesses, and if it happens again next year, he won't be able to pay his bills.

"I would never have bought (this land) if I had known it wasn't going to get water. Not when you pay the price you pay for it," he said. "If this is a one-time fluke, I'll suck it up and be fine. But I don't have another year in me."

Since 1964, the water supply of the Western Sacramento Valley has been virtually guaranteed, even during critically dry years, the result of an arcane water rights system and legal agreements underlying operations of the Central Valley Project, the federal government's massive water management system.

But as California weathers a third year of drought, conditions have grown so dry and reservoirs so low that the valley's landowners and irrigation districts are being forced to give up more water than ever before. Now, this region, which has relied on the largest portion of federally-managed water flowing from Lake Shasta, is wrestling with what to do as its deal with the federal government no longer protects them.

All relying on the lake's supplies will make sacrifices: Many are struggling to keep their cattle and crops. Refuges for wildlife also will have to cope with less water from Lake Shasta, endangering migratory birds. And the eggs of endangered salmon that depend on cold water released from Shasta Dam are expected to die by the millions.

For decades, water wars have pitted growers and ranchers against nature, north against south. But in this new California, where everyone is suffering, no one is guaranteed anything.

"In the end, when one person wins, everybody loses," Davy said. "And we don't actually solve the problem."

Portioning out the river's precious water

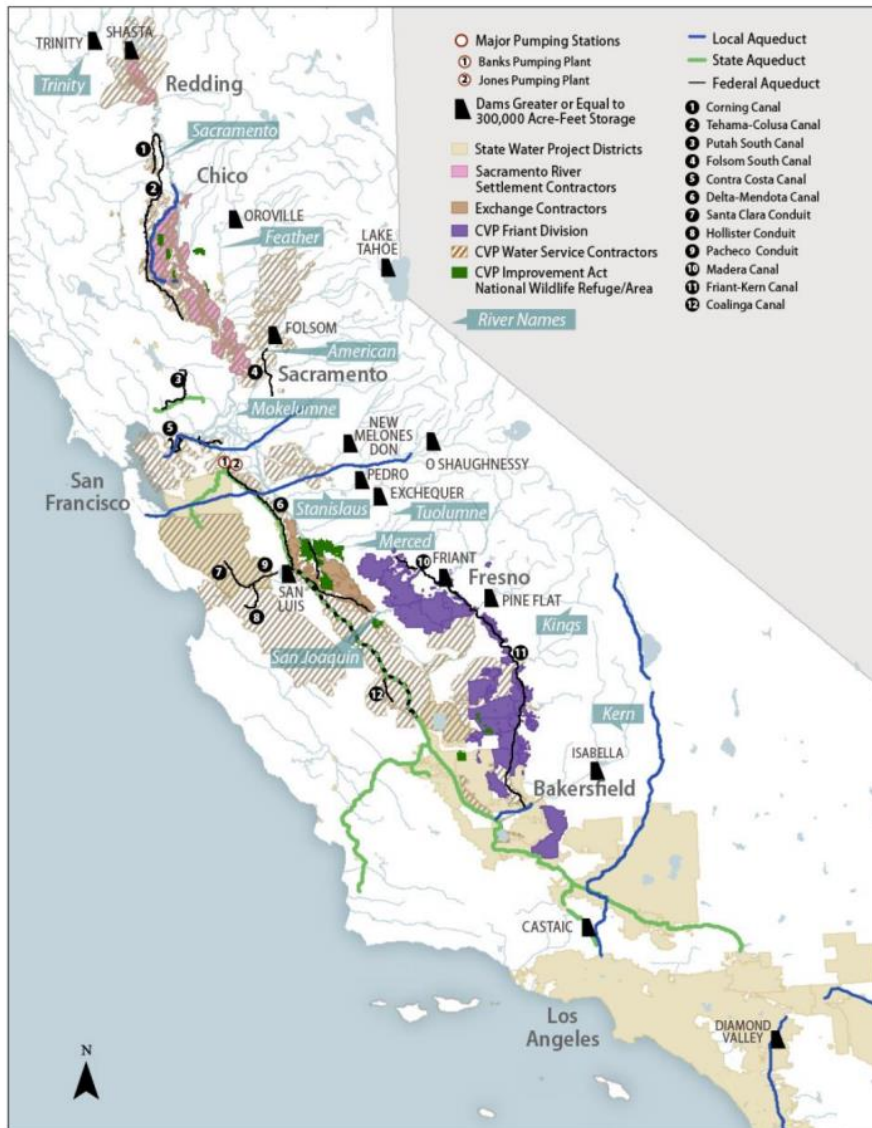
This parched valley was once a land of floods, regularly inundated when the Sacramento River overflowed to turn grasslands and riverbank forests into a vast, seasonal lake.

Settlers that flooded into California on the tide of the Gold Rush of 1849 staked their claims to the river's flow with notices posted to trees in a system of "first in time, first in right."

The river was corralled by levees, the region replumbed with drainage ditches and irrigation canals. Grasslands and swamps lush with tules turned to ranches and wheat fields, then to orchards, irrigated pasture and rice.

The federal government took over in the 1930s, when it began building the Central Valley Project's Shasta Dam, which displaced the Winnemem Wintu people. A 20-year negotiation between water rights holders and the US Bureau of Reclamation culminated in a deal in 1964.

Figure 1. Central Valley Project (CVP) and Related Facilities



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: Colored areas are based on water and irrigation district boundaries and do not correspond to the amount of water delivered from the Central Valley Project or the State Water Project. For example, some large areas have relatively small contracts for water compared with other, smaller areas.

Today, under the agreements, which were renewed in 2005, nearly 150 landowners and irrigation districts that supply almost half a million acres of agriculture in the western Sacramento Valley are entitled to receive about three times more water than Los Angeles and San Francisco use in a year.

It's a controversial amount in the parched state. Before this year, the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, as they're called, received the largest portion of the federally-managed supply of water that flows from Shasta Lake. It's more than cities receive, more than wildlife refuges, more even than other powerful agricultural suppliers like the Westlands Water District farther south.

Their contract bars the irrigation districts' supply from being cut by more than a quarter in critically dry years. During the last drought in 2014, federal efforts to cut it to 40% of the contracted amount were met with resistance, and deliveries ultimately increased to the full 75% allocation for the dry year.

But this year, facing exceptionally dry conditions, the irrigation districts negotiated with state and federal agencies, and agreed in March to reduce their water deliveries to 18%. Other agricultural suppliers with less senior rights are set to get nothing.

Growers understand that they have to sacrifice some water this year, said Thaddeus Bettner, general manager for Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, the largest of the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors and one of the largest irrigation districts in the state. But he wondered why irrigation districts in the Western Sacramento Valley draw so much of the blame.

"I understand we're bigger than everybody so we catch the focus," Bettner said. "We're just trying to survive this year. Frankly, it's just complete devastation up here. And it's unfortunate that the view seems to be that we should get hurt even more to save fish."

Cutting deliveries to growers means that more water can flow through the rivers, which slightly raises the chances for more endangered winter-run Chinook salmon to survive this year.

"They had the water rights to take 75% of their allocation instead of 18%, and we were anticipating another total bust," said Howard Brown, senior policy advisor with NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region. "One hundred percent temperature dependent mortality (of salmon eggs) would not have been something out of reason to imagine."

Yet more than half of the eggs of endangered winter-run Chinook salmon are expected to still die this year, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

State and federal biologists are racing to move some of the adult salmon to a cooler tributary of the Sacramento River and a hatchery.

"We're spreading the risk around, and putting our eggs in different baskets," Brown said. "The animal that's on the flag of California is extinct. How many can we afford to lose before we lose our identity as people and as citizens of California?"

'Nothing like I thought I'd ever see' in the Sacramento Valley

In any other year, Davy would run his cattle on rain-fed rangeland he leases in Tehama County until late spring before moving the herd to his home pasture, kept green and lush with spring and summer irrigation.

Davy, who grew up roping and running cattle, supports his career as a full-time rancher with his other full-time job as a farm advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension, specializing in livestock, rangelands and natural resources.

Three years ago, he sold his home in Cottonwood, on the Shasta-Tehama county line, for a fixer-upper nearby with holes in the floor, a shoddy electrical system and windows that wouldn't close. This fixer-upper had two inarguable selling points: a view of Mount Shasta and water from the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, a settlement contractor.

This year, without rain, the grass where his cows forage through the winter crunches underfoot.

"This grass should be up to my waist right now," Davy said, readying a chute he would soon use to transport his cattle. He unloaded hay from his pickup to feed the cows and calves until he could move them — unheard of, he said, in April.

Forty miles away, his pasture, green from the April rains, is faring a little better — but the green can't last without irrigation. Thinking about it too hard makes Davy feel sick.

"I try to stick to what I can get done today, and then assume next year I'll be okay. I think that's the mantra for agriculture," he said: "Next year will be better."

About 75 miles south of Davy's ranch, rangeland and irrigated pastures open up to orchards and thousands of acres of empty rice fields.

"Nothing like I thought I'd ever see," said Mathew Garcia, gazing at one of his dry rice fields in Glenn, about an hour and a half north of Sacramento.

In any other year, he would have been preparing to seed and flood the crumbled clay. This year, he had to abandon even the one field he'd planned to irrigate from a well. The ground was too thirsty to hold the water.

Garcia's water comes from two different irrigation districts with settlement contracts. This year, the roughly 420 acres he farms will see water deliveries either eliminated or too diminished to plant rice. He'll funnel the water instead to his tenant's irrigated pasture where cattle graze.

"Without the water, we have dirt. It's basically worthless," Garcia said. "It's very depressing."

California is one of the main rice producers in the United States, and almost all is grown in the Sacramento Valley. It's an especially water-demanding crop: The plants and evaporation drink up about two-thirds of the flows; the rest dribbles through the earth to refill groundwater stores or flows back into irrigation ditches that supply other crops, rivers and wetlands.

Garcia places some of the blame on the weather. But he also blames federal regulators, who allow water to flow from the reservoirs year-round for fish, wildlife and water quality.

"Everybody says well, you shouldn't farm in the desert. Does this look like a desert to you? No. It looks like fertile, beautiful farmland with the most amazing irrigation system that's ever been put in. And they're just taking the water from it. They're creating a desert."

In the depths of California's last historic drought from 2012 through 2016, Garcia could still plant his fields. Even with last year's reduced water deliveries, he planted — filling the gaps in water supply by pumping from his groundwater wells.

Garcia will survive this year: He credits his wife's foresight to purchase crop insurance years ago. Without it, he said, he'd be done — he'd have to sell land, maybe find another job.



Mathew Garcia, standing in one of his fallowed rice fields in Glenn, says he can't plant anything this year because of reduced water deliveries. Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

"If this drought sustains, I don't know how long insurance is going to last. And then at what point do you throw in the towel?" said Garcia. "There's a teetering point somewhere. Everybody's is different. I don't know where mine is yet."

Local water suppliers anticipate about 370,000 acres of cropland will go fallow in the western Sacramento Valley, the result of diminished deliveries to the settlement contractors. Most lie in Colusa and Glenn counties, where agriculture is the epicenter of the economy. Money and jobs radiate from the fields to the crop dusters and chemical suppliers, rice driers and warehouses.

And, like the water, jobs for farm workers have dried up.

For nine years, Sergio Cortez has been traveling from Jalisco, Mexico to work in Sacramento Valley fields. This is the driest he's ever seen it, and he knows that next year could be worse.

"Aquí el agua es todo, pues," he said. "Al no haber agua, pues no hay trabajo." Water is everything, he said. If there's no water, there's no work.

The parking lot at the migrant farmworker housing in Colusa County where Cortez and his family live for part of the year was full of cars and pickups that would normally be parked at the fields. Cortez hadn't worked in two days.

For Adolfo Morales Martinez, 74, it had been a month since he worked. And, at the end of April, his unemployment benefits were about to end.

"Desesperados. Estamos desesperados," he said. "Pues en el campo gana uno poquito, no? Y sin nada? No mas." We're desperate, he said. In the fields, he can earn a little. But now, nothing.

Normally Morales Martinez drives a tractor, readying rice fields for planting. Now it's like a desert, his wife, Alma Galavez, said.

"Eso está desértico, vea. Todo. Nada, Nada. Está feo y triste," she said. There's nothing. It's ugly and sad.

Extreme effects on salmon and birds, too

Environmental advocates and California tribes have been fighting the growers' and irrigation districts' claim to California's finite water supply for years, citing inadequate water to maintain water quality and temperatures for endangered fish and the Delta.

"People who have built their farms in the desert, or in areas where their water has to be exported to them, need to think about changing. Because that's what's killing the state," said Caleen Sisk, chief and spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu, whose lands were flooded with the damming of Lake Shasta.

To Sisk, the salmon that once spawned in the tributaries above the Central Valley signal the region's health. "If there are no salmon, there will be no people soon."

Federal scientists estimate that last year about three-quarters of endangered winter-run Chinook salmon eggs died because the water downstream of a depleted Lake Shasta was too warm. Only about 3% of the salmon ultimately survived to migrate downriver.

"It's been clear for decades that there was a need to reduce diversions," said Doug Obegi, senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The consequences are just becoming more and more extreme."

In 2020, California sued the Trump administration over what it said were flawed federal assessments for how the Central Valley Project's operations harm endangered species.

The judge sent the federal plans back for more work and approved what he called a "reasonable interim approach" that called for prioritizing fish and public safety over irrigation districts. He called the contracts an "800 pound gorilla" that "make it exceedingly and increasingly difficult" for the federal government to be "sufficiently protective of winter-run (salmon)."

US Bureau of Reclamation spokesperson Gary Pitzer said the agency worked with the districts to reach an agreement on how much water to deliver because “it’s the right thing to do, particularly during drought — one of the worst on record.”

Environmental advocacy groups applauded the reduced allocations to the Sacramento Valley irrigation districts. But they also raised concerns that other irrigation districts with similar contracts elsewhere in the state would still see their full dry year allocations, and cautioned that the temperatures will still kill salmon by the scores this year.

Wildlife refuges where birds can rest and eat during their 4,000-mile winter journeys along the Pacific Flyway also are receiving significantly less water this year.

Curtis McCasland, manager of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, expects less than half a typical year’s water supply to be delivered to the refuges this year — cobbled together from purchased water supplies, federal deliveries and, he hopes, storm flows this winter.

North of Sacramento, the five refuges in the complex are painstakingly tended wilderness in a sea of agriculture. More than a century ago, wetlands fanned out for miles to either side of the flood-prone Sacramento River. Now, more than 90% of the state’s wetlands are gone, drained for fields, homes, and businesses. Those remaining in these refuges now depend on water flowing from Shasta Dam and shunted through irrigation canals.

At the end of April, the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge offered an oasis among the barren rice fields, which normally provide about two-thirds of the migrating bird’s calories. Dark green bulrushes rose from shallow ponds where shorebirds jackhammered their bills in and out of the muck.

McCasland knows all this lush green can’t last. As he steered an SUV past black-necked stilts picking their way through the water and ducklings paddling ferociously, he braced for another dry year.

“Instead of being those postage stamps in a sea of rice, we’re going to be postage stamps in a sea of fallow fields,” McCasland said.

In a typical year, the refuge wetlands that depend on federal water get much less water than the settlement contractors are entitled to — about 4% of the total, McCasland estimates. And he worries that this year, whatever water they do receive won’t be enough to keep all these birds fed and healthy.

More than a million birds descend on the refuges every winter to rest and find food. More stop in the surrounding rice fields, which are largely dry this year.

“In years where Shasta is at a normal or average level, it should be no problem to get us the water,” he said. “In years like this, certainly it’s going to be terribly difficult.”

The drought may already have taken a toll. Last November, only 745,000 birds landed in the refuge, a decrease of more than 700,000 from November of 2019, although some may have remained farther north because of unseasonably balmy weather there.

The refuges are like a farm, where McCasland and his colleagues carefully cultivate tule, shrubs and grasses with pulses of summertime irrigations. With less water this summer, these wintertime food sources for birds will dry and shrivel. And with less water during the peak of fall and winter migrations, hungry birds will be packed together in the few remaining marshes — raising the risk of outbreaks from diseases like avian botulism or cholera.

“There’s not a lot of places for these birds to go,” he said. “The Sacramento Valley has always been the bankable piece....They do have wings, they may be able to move through.” But, he added, “the question is, what happens next?”

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Governor Newsom Convenes Summit with Local Water Leaders, Urges More Aggressive Response to Ongoing Drought

Office of Governor Newsom | May 23, 2022

At meeting with the state's largest urban water suppliers, Governor Newsom called for an increase in water conservation

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Gavin Newsom convened leaders from the state's largest urban water suppliers, which cover two thirds of Californians, and water associations imploring them to take more aggressive actions to combat drought and better engage their customers to ensure all Californians are doing their part to save water.

After the last drought, local water agencies pushed for greater flexibility on water conservation and drought response based on regional needs and water supplies, arguing that tailored local approaches would be more effective than statewide mandates. Governor Newsom has embraced this localized approach, but voiced concerns today given recent conservation levels around the state, and called on water agencies to step up efforts to reduce water use amid extreme drought conditions.

Governor Newsom warned that if this localized approach to conservation does not result in a significant reduction in water use statewide this summer, the state could be forced to enact mandatory restrictions.

The Governor will reconvene these same agencies in the next two months to provide an update on their progress.

“Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “Californians made significant changes since the last drought but we have seen an uptick in water use, especially as we enter the summer months. We all have to be more thoughtful about how to make every drop count.”



Governor Newsom convenes summit of state's largest urban water suppliers

The Governor also called upon local water agencies to submit water use data more frequently and increase transparency in order to more accurately measure whether California is meeting water conservation goals. In addition, the Governor called on local water agencies to increase education and outreach efforts to Californians on the urgency of the crisis.

In July 2021, Governor Newsom called on Californians to voluntarily reduce their water use by 15%. At the end of March 2022 after the state failed to meet its 15% goal, the Governor issued an Executive Order calling on local water agencies to escalate their response to the ongoing drought. Tomorrow, at the Governor's direction, the State Water Resources Control Board will vote on a statewide ban on watering of non-functional turf in the commercial, industrial and institutional sectors as well as regulations requiring local agencies to implement water use restrictions amid the possibility that water supplies may be up to 20% lower due to extreme weather. Currently, local water agencies have implemented restrictions on about half of California's population. If the Board's regulations are approved, every urban area of California will be covered by a local plan to reduce water use.

Banning watering of decorative lawns would save between 156,000 acre-feet and 260,000 acre-feet per year, the equivalent of water used by 780,000 households in a year.

The climate crisis has resulted in the western United States experiencing one of the most extensive and intense droughts on record. January through March were the driest first three months in the state's recorded history, the state's largest reservoirs are currently at half of their historical averages, and the state's snowpack is just 14 percent of average.

The Governor's California Blueprint proposed this year would invest an additional \$2 billion for drought response, which includes \$100 million in addition to a previous investment of \$16 million this fiscal year for a statewide education and communications effort on drought. These investments build on the previous \$5.2 billion three-year investment in the state's drought response and water resilience through the California Comeback Plan (2021).



Governor Newsom convenes summit of state's largest urban water suppliers

California's master water plan, the Water Resilience Portfolio, is a comprehensive vision to build water resilience containing more than 142 separate detailed actions to be taken by state agencies to ensure that California's water systems can cope with rising temperatures, shrinking snowpacks, rising sea levels and more intense and frequent periods of drought. In March 2021, the Administration released the 2012-2016 Drought Report, which contains lessons learned by state agencies during the last drought.

The state is calling on Californians to take immediate action to avoid a crisis, including:

- Limiting outdoor watering – cutting back by even just one day a week can save you up to 20% more water.
- Taking shorter showers. Going to a 5 minute shower to save up to 12.5 gallons per shower when using a water-efficient shower head.
- Taking showers instead of baths – a bath uses up to 2.5 times the amount of water as a shower.
- Using a broom instead of a hose to clean outdoor areas to save 6 gallons of water every minute.
- Washing full loads of clothes to save 15-45 gallons of water per load.

More water saving tips can be found at www.saveourwater.com. For the latest on drought, please visit drought.ca.gov.

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How Greywater Systems Can Help You Save Money And Water: An Interview With Leigh Jerrard Of Greywater Corps

Forbes | May 31, 2022 | Afdhel AzizContributor



An American family of four uses an average of 300 gallons a day. That's a lot of water - 100,000 gallons a year! In Southern California where I reside, the problem is compounded because our water comes from remote sources - the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Colorado River - pumped hundreds of miles to get here, over mountains and across deserts. There's also a huge carbon footprint involved with that: moving and treating water accounts for 19% of all electricity used in the state of California.

But now the problem is getting dire because there simply isn't enough water. The current megadrought is the worst in over 1,200 years. Even when it does rain, global warming is disrupting our supply, which is based on year-round snowpack in the Sierras. There's less snow, and it melts too soon.

But there is something you can do. Most homes use about half their water indoors and half outdoors, for irrigation. The indoor water use is mostly greywater: bathtubs, showers, laundry, and bathroom sinks. That water doesn't have to go down the drain. It can be recaptured and used a second time, for landscape irrigation. Greywater systems save water, protecting the remote aquatic resources where we get our water from. They reduce wastewater flows to the ocean, which are a whole other source of environmental problems. And they can sustain a beautiful and bountiful garden, growing healthy fruit and shade trees that sequester carbon and cool the neighborhood.

I caught up with Leigh Jerrard, Principal at Greywater Corps to look back at his journey and learn more about the issue.

Growing up in Central Illinois, Leigh had always been fascinated by how things worked, the tools and processes of construction and spent a lot of time in pursuits like fixing junk cars, part-time jobs in construction, woodworking projects. As he pointed out, one element of midwestern values is that you can't abide waste. "There's an element of thriftiness that's related to conservation, but it's more self-serving. It's like that old saying about the slaughterhouse: the only thing they don't use is the squeal."

He spent a couple summers working in the Youth Conservation Corps, living and working for two months in a state park near the Mississippi river. The work was exhausting - fixing trails, clearing brush, planting trees - but the spirit of stewardship and camaraderie was exhilarating, as he recollected. "We were taking care of the land, working our asses off, having a great time, and getting paid for it!"

In the 90s he went back to school to study architecture. His first job was at Frank Gehry's office, building scale models of weird curvy buildings. He loved it - but once he started managing multi-million projects it became a lot less fun. He was simply struck by the excesses of "starchitecture" - buildings made of massive slumped glass panels and titanium cladding.

From there he started his own architecture practice that emphasized adapting existing structures rather than demolition; recycled, repurposed and reused materials; and carefully considered interrelationships between the built environment and the natural world.

Following the birth of his son in 2005 Leigh became increasingly aware of our extraction and consumption of natural resources, particularly water. As he reflected back, he'd give him a bath, and when he pulled the plug he'd watch 50 gallons swirl down the drain, never to be seen again. "I was struck by this and started to experiment with ways to recapture that water, irrigating our thirsty plants," he added. This was the genesis of Greywater Corps. Since then Greywater Corps have installed around 800 systems across Southern California with a crew of 12 installers (and they are looking to hire more employees).



Greywater Corps Crew, October 2021 © 2016 BY DEBRA MORRISON

I asked him what products to use when repurposing water at home. There's a simple answer. "You wouldn't want anything that you don't want on your skin going into your soil. If you're worried about putting it into the dirt you may not want it on your skin either. You'll want to avoid products that contain large amounts of bleach, borax, parabens, or other harsh chemicals," he said. Sodium is also a concern; Greywater Corps recommend liquid laundry detergent since the powders can contain a lot of salt. Soaps also contain phosphorus and nitrogen, micronutrients that will help your garden flourish. As he pointed out, roses and citrus trees love greywater. Luckily there are tons of organic and eco-friendly products that will not damage soil.

All greywater systems include a way to "turn them off" - a valve or a switch you can flick that will divert greywater back to the sewer. This is handy for loads of laundry with bleach or if your plants are simply getting too much water.

Greywater systems can also add value to your property. A typical house has a heavy environmental footprint: built of trees, metals, glass and concrete extracted from the earth, it sits on its lot and continues to consume resources - electricity, gas, groceries, water. But a house with a greywater system is a house that gives back to the land, nourishing the soil and garden.

Greywater Corps favor low-tech, low-maintenance systems that avoid filtration, storage tanks, and sterilization. Their systems rely on natural processes: gravity flows, beneficial microbes to break down impurities, and wood-chip mulch beds to percolate and spread greywater. These

systems need very little maintenance. They will work quietly in the background for decades, returning water to the land. They can be installed in both new construction and existing homes.

Although it may take decades to amortize the cost of a greywater system, this timeframe is getting shorter as water rates rise. But the real value is in the landscape and the guarantee of an abundant source of water to irrigate it, even in times of drought or irrigation restrictions. Greywater provides a form of drought insurance for your beautiful garden.

I finally asked him if he hopes for a world where every house comes automatically equipped with systems like theirs, as access to water becomes an ever larger issue. He exclaimed: "Absolutely - plants don't need drinking water! They are perfectly fine with gently-used greywater, and as water becomes more scarce it doesn't make sense to just let it go down the drain."

He also pointed out to the fact that greywater was illegal for many years, but that's changing. In 2010 the California Plumbing Code introduced a new chapter dedicated to greywater. New houses in Los Angeles are required to run separate drain lines for greywater and blackwater, making them "greywater-ready". Greywater systems provide a path towards abundance, shade, habitat restoration, lush greenery, and replenishing the aquifer.

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California adopting more aggressive water conservation rules; what to know

Fox 40 | May 29, 2022 | Nouran Salahieh

As California's relentless drought continues, state water regulators on Tuesday adopted new emergency water rules meant to ensure more aggressive conservation statewide.

The State Water Resources Control Board voted on the emergency drought regulations in response to Gov. Gavin Newsom's March executive order.

"California is facing a drought crisis and every local water agency and Californian needs to step up on conservation efforts," Newsom said in a statement. "I am hopeful the measures enacted by the State Water Board will lead to a reduction of water use across the state. These conservation measures are increasingly important as we enter the summer months."

What's changing?

The new regulation bans irrigating "non-functional" turf at commercial, industrial and institutional properties, like grass in front of or next to large industrial or commercial buildings.

Officials defined "non-functional turf" as turf that is solely ornamental and not regularly used for recreational purposes or for civic or community events.

Not included in the watering ban is turf that is used for recreation or other community purposes. Water used at homes or water to maintain trees is also not included.

Officials said banning watering of decorative lawns would save between 156,000 acre-feet and 260,000 acre-feet per year — the equivalent of water used by 780,000 households in a year.

The new regulation also requires all local water suppliers to implement water use restrictions as California enters the hot, dry summer months.

The suppliers will have to take action under "level 2" of their water shortage contingency plans, which is meant to address up to a 20% shortage of water supplies.

That means that residents could see limits on outdoor watering that only allow them to water their yards on certain days or during specific hours.

Water suppliers could also enforce water-use prohibitions, state officials said.

"The severity of this drought requires all Californians to save water in every possible way," State Water Board chair Joaquin Esquivel said.

Why is this happening?

Dry weather conditions have resulted in one of the most intense droughts on record in the West coast.

January through March were the driest first three months in California's recorded history, the state's largest reservoirs are currently at half of their historical averages, and the state's snowpack is just 14% of average.

In July, Newsom called for Californians to voluntarily cut water use 15%. But that didn't happen. Water use in cities and towns actually climbed by nearly 19% in March.

The governor warned this week that if there is no significant reduction in water use statewide this summer, the state could be forced to enact mandatory restrictions.

"I'm asking all Californians to step up, because every single drop counts," Newsom said.

What to expect

Some water suppliers have already imposed strict new restrictions on customers.

In April, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California declared a water shortage emergency, and took the unprecedented step of ordering restrictions on outdoor watering in parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties. The new watering restrictions are set to take effect June 1.

Still, about half of California's 436 water suppliers have not yet activated "level 2" of their water shortage contingency plans.

Urban water suppliers will need to fast-track and submit supply and demand assessments to plan for potential extended dry conditions, officials said.

For water suppliers that haven't submitted drought plans, the emergency regulation will require them to take conservation actions, including restricting outdoor irrigation to two days a week and prohibiting landscape irrigation between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The ban on non-functional turf becomes effective after approval from the Office of Administrative Law, which could come in a matter of days, officials said.

Level 2 requirements for urban water suppliers are expected to take effect on June 10.

As the water shortage continues, the state is calling on Californians to take these steps "to avoid a crisis:"

Cut back on outdoor water. Officials say limiting water by even just one day a week can save up to 20% more water.

- Take shorter showers.
- Taking showers instead of baths, which use up to 2.5 times the amount of water as a shower.

- Using a broom instead of a hose to clean outdoor areas.
- Washing full loads of clothes to save 15-45 gallons of water per load.

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Newsom urges aggressive water conservation and warns of statewide restrictions

LA Times | May 23, 2022 | Ian James



Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks with leaders of urban water agencies during a meeting in Sacramento on May 23.(Gov. Newsom's Office)

Gov. Gavin Newsom met with leaders of the state's largest urban water suppliers Monday and implored them to step up efforts to get people to reduce water use as California's drought continues to worsen. He warned that if conservation efforts don't improve this summer, the state could be forced to impose mandatory water restrictions throughout the state.

Ten months ago, Newsom called for Californians to voluntarily cut water use 15%, but the state remains far from that goal.

The latest conservation figures have been especially poor. Water use in cities and towns increased by nearly 19% in March, an especially warm and dry month. Compared with a 2020 baseline, statewide cumulative water savings since July have amounted to just 3.7%.

"Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures," Newsom said in a statement. "Californians made significant changes since the last drought but we have seen an

For part of the 2012-16 drought, then-Gov. Jerry Brown ordered a mandatory 25% reduction in urban water use. Many Californians responded by cutting back and taking steps such as converting lawns to drought-tolerant plants.

Local water agencies told state officials they preferred an approach that allowed for greater flexibility and would be more tailored to their local situations. Newsom has favored a locally driven approach. But the governor's office said in a statement that Newsom "voiced concerns today given recent conservation levels around the state."

"Gov. Newsom warned that if this localized approach to conservation does not result in a significant reduction in water use statewide this summer, the state could be forced to enact mandatory restrictions," his office said. "The governor will reconvene these same agencies in the next two months to provide an update."

Monday's meeting was not open to the public and was not aired live. Officials who attended the meeting at the California Natural Resources Agency, in Sacramento, included leaders of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, San Diego County Water Authority, East Bay Municipal Utility District and other large water suppliers. Their agencies together supply water to about two-thirds of Californians.

Newsom issued an executive order in March calling for local water agencies to implement more aggressive conservation measures. Following that order, the State Water Resources Control Board will vote Tuesday on emergency regulations that require local water suppliers to activate "Level 2" of their local contingency plans to prepare for a shortage of up to 20%. The regulations also include a statewide ban on using potable water to irrigate "non-functional" grass at commercial, industrial and institutional properties — which include homeowners' associations as well as businesses.

About half of California's population is now under water restrictions implemented by local water agencies, according to the governor's office. If the state water board approves the emergency regulations, every urban area throughout the state will be covered by a local plan for reducing water use.

The severe drought, now in its third year in California, is one of the most extreme on record and has been worsened by hotter temperatures with global warming. The first three months of the year were the driest on record. The state's largest reservoirs are now at about half their average levels.

Across the western U.S., scientists have found that the extreme dryness since 2000 has become the driest 22-year period in at least 1,200 years, a megadrought that research shows is being intensified by climate change.

Some scientists describe the trend as aridification and say the West must prepare for heat-driven drying to continue as temperatures climb with the burning of fossil fuels and rising levels of greenhouse gases.

Newsom has proposed an additional \$2 billion this year for drought response efforts.

The state government has scaled up its drought campaign, called Save Our Water, and is urging Californians to conserve by taking steps such as limiting outdoor watering, taking shorter showers and washing full loads of clothes.

Adel Hagekhalil, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District, attended Monday's meeting and said the district supports Newsom's call for reducing water consumption to stretch California's shrinking supplies ahead of the summer months.

"We appreciate the governor's collaborative approach in addressing statewide drought conditions by allowing water agencies to determine the water savings actions appropriate for the specific circumstances of their communities," Hagekhalil said in a statement. "Different parts of our state have different water supply sources and are being affected by the state's drought differently."

The Metropolitan Water District in April declared a water shortage emergency and ordered restrictions on outdoor watering in parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties that rely on the hard-hit State Water Project, which transports water southward from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The water restrictions are set to take effect June 1 and are aimed at reducing water use by about 35%.

Though Newsom's meeting with managers of water agencies focused on improving conservation in urban areas, the drought is also affecting agriculture and food production. Many growers have seen their water deliveries cut sharply, and have turned to pumping more groundwater or leaving some farmland dry and unplanted.

Of the water that's diverted and pumped in California, state data show that on average about 80% is used by agriculture while the other roughly 20% is used by cities and towns.

In a recent report for the California Department of Food and Agriculture, researchers calculated that reduced water deliveries resulted in 395,000 acres of cropland left dry and unplanted last year — an area larger than Los Angeles.

The researchers calculated that the drought last year caused the state's agriculture industry to shrink by an estimated 8,745 jobs and shoulder \$1.2 billion in costs due to water cutbacks. Those costs are expected to grow this year as more farmland in the Central Valley is left dry.

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Gray Declares Victory in Effort to Keep Reservoir Projects Moving Forward

GV Wire | May 27, 2022 | Bill McEwen, News Director



Kevin Spesert of the Sites Project Authority points to a canal that would be one of the water sources for the planned reservoir. (AP File)

Assemblyman Adam Gray (D-Merced) put together a bipartisan coalition to defeat a bill that would have prohibited the State Water Board from issuing new water right permits.

The bill's defeat came in a showdown Thursday between Gray and the author of the legislation, Assemblyman Bill Quirk of Hayward, a fellow Democrat.

According to Gray, Assembly Bill 2639 would have jeopardized new water storage projects such as Sites Reservoir in the drought-ravaged state.

Sites is one of seven water storage projects eligible for funding from a 2014 voter-approved state water bond. In March, the federal government signaled its intent to loan the Sites project nearly \$2.2 billion — about half of the cost to design, plan and build it.

"It took a broad coalition to defeat the bill. The San Joaquin Valley doesn't always have enough friends in the state Legislature to stop bad bills, but we did today," Gray said in a news release. "I am grateful to my colleagues who took the time to understand a complicated issue."

Bill Fell Eight Votes Short of Passage

The bill needed 41 votes to pass the Assembly, but it received 33. Forty-four lawmakers voted no or abstained. The strongest opposition was recorded from representatives from the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento, and Inland Empire.

“There is no other region of the state that would be as heavily impacted by this bill as my district and the people I represent,” Gray said. “I asked my colleagues to consider what they would ask of me if their districts were similarly targeted. I told the story of the decades-long fight my community has waged against the water grab, and how the State Water Board has decided that the impacts to our economy and our drinking water are ‘significant, but unavoidable.’ I asked them if the Assembly was prepared to make the same decision.”

Pros and Cons of AB 2639

Quirk wrote the bill with an eye on reversing the ecological decline of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and protecting the economy of the Delta region. Several environmental groups, including the Planning and Conservation League, backed his effort. Supporters cited the fact that the last update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan was 27 years ago.

The Association of California Water Agencies and several agricultural trade associations opposed the bill but signaled potential support if it were amended. The bill’s flaw, as opponents saw it, was that “the proposed prohibition on any new water right permits ... would have profound negative impacts on water management and work against California becoming climate-resilient.”

However, Quirk declined to make the changes sought by opponents and put the bill up to a vote.

“Refusing to negotiate has recently become a badge of honor for some members in the state Legislature,” Gray said. “Hopefully, this is a lesson and an example that good public policy happens when all points of view are considered. More than anything, I think their refusal to compromise is what killed this bill.”

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Tech Helps Map and Manage Groundwater in California

The California Department of Water Resources is using technology to map groundwater throughout the state, enabling better basin management from local water managers by providing access to more thorough data.

Govtech.com | May 25, 2022 | Julia Edinger

To better understand and sustainably manage the groundwater in the state, one California agency has embarked on a project conducting airborne electromagnetic (AEM) surveys, using helicopters towing a huge loop of instruments.

The effort to improve groundwater management in the state is not a new one, and following the passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), tech has driven the conversation. While online maps have improved understanding, the Department of Water Resources (DWR)'s project using AEM project aims to further these efforts and support long-term sustainability.

California has historically faced drought-related challenges, and this year, drought conditions are impacting farmers in Central Valley, causing farmers to rely on depleted groundwater supplies.

According to the most recent drought update from the state on May 16, January, February and March of this year were the driest on record for over 100 years. All 58 of California's counties were under a drought emergency proclamation at the time of this report.

As outlined in an April 2022 policy brief from the Public Policy Institute of California, this drought has raised challenges for SGMA implementation. The report underlines that dry conditions will persist in 2022, increasing impacts — both economically and agriculturally.

The SGMA was signed into California state law in 2014, requiring local groundwater sustainability agencies to be formed to ensure groundwater management decisions minimize negative environmental impacts. In 2018, Proposition 68 was passed by voters, authorizing \$4 billion for water infrastructure and environmental protection and restoration projects. \$12 million of this funding was allocated to conduct the AEM survey and analysis for drought and groundwater investments, building on the efforts of SGMA.

Steven Springhorn, a supervising engineering geologist and manager at DWR, said that the enactment of the SGMA was a pivotal moment for the state's groundwater management practices. But it was the funding from Proposition 68 that enabled this AEM data collection.

So what does this data collection project actually entail? DWR engineering geologist Katherine Dlubac, project manager for DWR's statewide AEM surveys, explained that the geophysical method of gathering data involves a helicopter flying at about 200 feet, towing a large hoop about 100 feet beneath.

“So when we fly across the Earth along defined flight paths, we send signals into the subsurface, and we receive them when they bounce back,” she explained. “And we can use that information and interpret it for aquifer properties.”

Layers of aquifers — permeable rock that can contain groundwater — make up a groundwater basin.

The specific properties the agency is interpreting for within these aquifers are the distribution of materials like sand, gravel, silt and clay. Sands and gravels within an aquifer typically allow for water flow, while silts and clays typically inhibit water flow. The AEM data provides DWR with images of an aquifer’s large-scale properties for a depth of about 1,000 feet.

But the data collected is really information about the electromagnetic properties, like the electrical resistivity of different materials. High electrical resistivity typically corresponds to coarse grain materials like sands and gravels, while low electrical resistivity typically corresponds to fine grain materials like silts and clays.

Through those properties, and with the additional information the agency already has available from boreholes, DWR can interpret where different materials are located.

So the short-term goal, Springhorn said, is to get this AEM data into local agencies’ hands so they can use it to inform their local groundwater management decisions — like what locations are best for groundwater recharge projects.

The long-term goal, though, is to support California’s Groundwater (Bulletin 118), a document with a compendium of information about the status, condition and management of groundwater in the state — both from the AEM technology and other information sources. This resource will help inform a comprehensive understanding of the basin’s hydrology, which can be used by DWR, local groundwater managers and members of the public.

The compendium is published every five years, and the latest update was finished in 2021.

The surveying started in summer 2021 and takes place for a few months at a time. This spring has involved collecting data throughout the state’s Central Valley, Dlubac said. This is where the majority of groundwater use is occurring. When this area’s data collection is complete, only 15 percent of the data collection will remain.

Some data is already released to the public, but the remaining data will be made available publicly through the year 2023.

The data helps guide decision-making in drought conditions. For example, in planning to better withstand future droughts, the technology helps to understand where the water is, where it can be accessed and where it may be stored for future droughts. Springhorn underlined that during drought conditions, groundwater basins make up about 60 percent of the state’s water supply.

In addition, more surveying enables DWR to further define high-priority areas that are connected to drought. This can help highlight where disadvantaged communities may be at risk of declining groundwater levels, for example.

Over the next year, Springhorn said the focus will shift to supporting local agencies through partnerships and data delivery.

Groundwater sustainability agencies throughout the state are forming groundwater sustainability plans, which define how groundwater will be managed over the next 20 years and beyond, Springhorn said.

The Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency, which was formed in 2017, was able to access groundwater basin data prior to other local agencies, because the Tulare Irrigation District served as a pilot program for this type of data collection in 2015 in partnership with Stanford University.

According to Aaron Fukuda, general manager of the Tulare Irrigation District and of the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency, this data collection has transformed the image water managers have of what their groundwater looks like.

“We’re making multimillion-dollar decisions,” he explained. “We’re potentially making decisions that impact our communities based upon everything underground that you cannot see.”

Fukuda said that prior to this project, the images were essentially two-dimensional “crayon drawings,” but as he explained, having a better image of what is beneath the surface allows for better decision-making.

As he explained it, in order to plan where to go for a trip, one needs to have a map. This data provides that map to help local agencies better chart their course.

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California's drought has caused entire towns to sink nearly a foot in just one year.

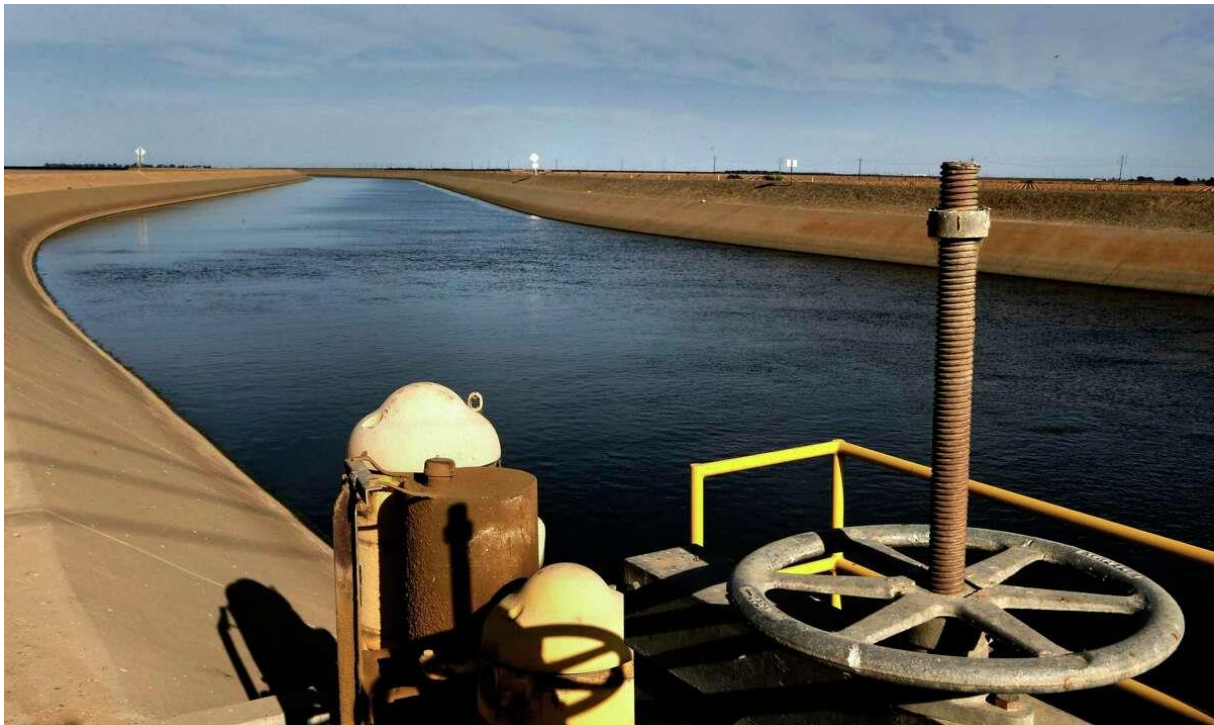
San Francisco Chronicle | May 27, 2022 | Yoohyun Jung

The ground is sinking in parts of California as the continued drought strains reservoirs, increasing reliance on the state's already precarious groundwater reserves depleted by years of well-pumping.

In just one year, from October 2020 to September 2021, satellite-based estimates showed entire towns in the Central Valley, including in Kings and Tulare counties, sinking by nearly a foot. The maximum loss recorded during that time was 1.1 feet on the northwestern edge of Tulare County.

The sinking, known as land subsidence, happens when excessive pumping dries out the water reserves underground and collapses the space where water used to be. Experts say it's a century-old problem in California that regulators have tried to slow with sustainability measures. But with the changing climate, they face an uphill battle.

"It's a latent issue that's been building over a long time and we're kind of seeing a lot of fallout from that," said Andrew Ayres, an environmental resources and economics researcher at the Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan public policy think tank.



The San Joaquin Valley has experienced some of the worst land subsidence in the state. Above: The Delta Mendota canal has been awarded more than \$3 million for repairs.

Land subsidence threatens infrastructure, including roads and canals, he said. Damage from it led to a \$3.3 million repair project at the Delta Mendota canal in San Joaquin Valley, which

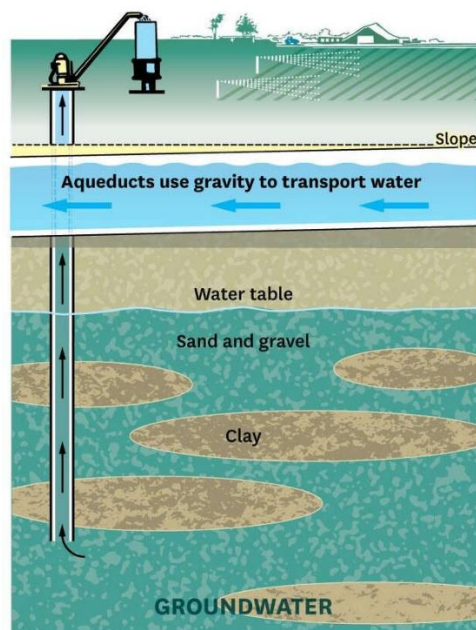
delivers water to 1.2 million acres of farmland and 2 million people in the region. The repair project, the funding for which was announced April this year, is part of a larger effort by the state water department to address deficiencies in California's water conveyance systems.

"As we pump groundwater out of the aquifer, the water exists in these spaces between various layers and pieces of rock," Ayres said. "If you pump out enough water, those places will get compressed and this leads to a loss in long-term storage."

How groundwater pumping leads to subsidence

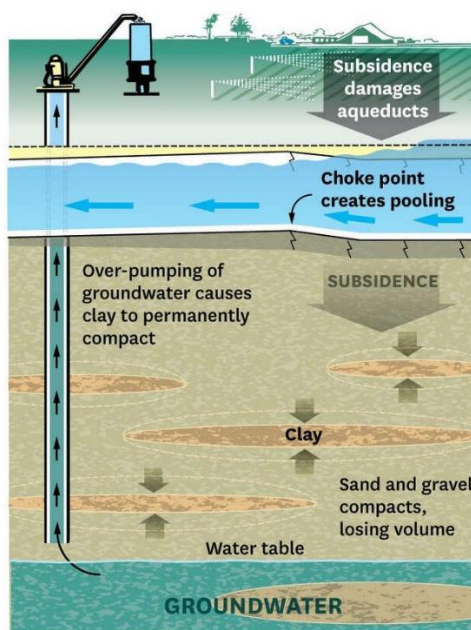
Subsidence occurs when underground soil settles into voids created by the removal of groundwater. Deep groundwater pumping has been one of the primary causes of subsidence in the Central Valley and becomes worse during extended drought periods when the demand for water by farmers increases. Aqueducts are at risk of damage and failure, causing flooding or emergency outages.

Deep underground water is pumped for irrigation



John Blanchard / The Chronicle
Source: U.S. Geological Survey

Years of groundwater pumping result in land subsidence



Even if an aquifer is recharged with rain or otherwise, it won't be able to hold as much water as it used to, Ayres added. That means, increasingly, accessing water is going to be more difficult and costly.

"You're using water today that you're not going to have available to you in the future," he said.

"It might be impossible to access any remaining groundwater supplies," he added.

The problem existed long before major infrastructure and sustainability requirements were put in place. The US Geological Survey says between the 1920s and 1970s, significant land

subsidence occurred in about half of the San Joaquin Valley, or about 5,200 square miles, with some areas subsiding by as much as 28 feet.

The continued depletion of groundwater reserves, especially in drought years, is worrisome because of groundwater's critical role as a buffer when there's little rain or snowpack to replenish the state's many surface water resources, like reservoirs.

"In drought years, (groundwater) can make up to 60% of the state's water supply," said Steven Springhorn, a supervising engineering geologist for the water department. That's in comparison to about 40% in non-drought years.

When major surface water sources, such as the State Water Project, can't deliver enough water during drought, local water agencies must find alternative sources of water, such as by pumping from the ground or buying. The State Water Project is a massive system of dams and canals (similar to the Central Valley Project). It delivers water to about 27 million people, including farmers as well as city-dwellers.

The State Water Project announced it expects to provide just 5% of the water requested by contractors in the coming year.

"This year, we don't have any surface water to provide to our growers," said Kristin Sicke, general manager of the Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, which provides irrigation water to farmers in western Yolo County, as well as delivering water to dozens of smaller municipal and industrial customers.

But the groundwater situation is also dire. Sicke said the district is anticipating record-low groundwater levels this year — beyond the historical low point set during the 1976-77 drought, she said.

Many wells, not just in western Yolo County but across the state, are reporting similarly grim groundwater levels. As of early May, more than 60% wells in California that reported data within the past year indicated below normal levels of water, data shows.

"This is a problem, especially for rural communities that tend not to have very deep wells," said Ayres, of the policy research group. "It's also a problem for ag users who, you know, maybe drilled a well 15 years ago when groundwater tables were a lot higher than they are today."

There was heavier reliance on pumping in the past before key sustainability measures, such as the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2015, created tighter regulations around groundwater, he said. Much of the most persistent overdraft happened then, and the long term consequences will continue to play out.

In recent years, many farmers are choosing to fallow ground without planting instead of resorting to well-pumping, he said. "In part, that's because they kind of see the writing on the

wall and are acting to control the negative impacts on the groundwater aquifer. In other cases, it's because groundwater sustainability agencies have already adopted a constraint on how much groundwater people can pump, so they don't have an option."

Without water, crops can't grow, said Ryan Jacobsen, CEO of the Fresno County Farm Bureau. The uncertainty of future conditions will look makes securing water supply more challenging. "Not knowing if this is year three of three or year three of 10 makes it more difficult for preparation purposes."

Farmers, too, are seeking sustainable solutions, including investing in sophisticated technology for efficiency. "There's definitely been a very large push to utilize every drop possible."

The scarcity of water underscores the importance of monitoring groundwater, said Springhorn of the water department. Rigorous monitoring helps inform drought response and advanced planning as water agencies and agricultural communities navigate drought. Among the efforts to protect groundwater reserves include improved monitoring of groundwater systems, Springhorn of the water department said.

Sicke, the water manager in Yolo County, said her agency may need to reconsider its revenue structure, which currently relies more on surface water availability, should these prolonged drought conditions turn out to be the "new normal" for the state.

But for now, Sicke said she remains hopeful for a natural recovery. "We have seen the recovery historically when rain has come. We're trying not to forget. Right now, it's hard."

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