

From: water_news-admin@water.ca.gov on behalf of Cohen, Jeff [jcohen@water.ca.gov]

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Subject: 2. DWR'S CALIFORNIA WATER NEWS: SUPPLY - 10/26/04

Department of Water Resources

California Water News

A daily compilation of significant news articles and comment

October 26, 2004

2. Supply

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THIS JUST IN / CALFED FUNDING

Secretary Norton Praises President's Signing of Landmark CALFED Legislation

News release, U.S. Department of Interior - 10/26/04

WASHINGTON - Interior Secretary Gale Norton today praised President Bush's signing of landmark legislation that authorizes \$389 million for a major environmental initiative to restore California's critical Bay-Delta estuary while also addressing the needs of urban and agricultural waters users.

The president signed the Water Supply Reliability and Environmental Improvement Act, popularly known as CALFED, on Oct. 25, 2004. The legislation provides federal authorization for a long-term collaborative plan for environmental restoration and enhancement of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta estuary. The initiative also calls for making needed improvements in statewide water supplies, flood control and water quality.

"This landmark legislation represents the culmination of a strong bipartisan effort by the California Congressional delegation to secure California's water future," Norton said. "As the largest and most comprehensive water-management plan in the nation, the CALFED program is a national model of collaborative resource management. The Department of the Interior affirms its commitment to working with the State of California and water and environmental interests to address California's water needs."

"I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Chairman Richard Pombo, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Chairman Pete Domenici, and Rep. Ken Calvert in working to craft this bill," Norton continued, "and for working so hard with the many stakeholder interests in California that support this program. With the President's signature, the CALFED family can now take on the most challenging phase in its decade long history -- implementation."

CALFED is a partnership of 24 California and federal agencies and representatives of California's environmental, urban and agricultural communities that is built on the

common recognition that their missions and interests can be accomplished best through collaboration and cooperation.

CALFED agencies have spent \$1 billion over the last decade to significantly improve the ecological health of the Bay-Delta watershed by restoring and protecting habitat and

enhancing the environment for fisheries and wetlands. The CALFED Program includes actions to recover species listed under the state and federal endangered species acts. The newly signed legislation ensures that CALFED will continue species and ecosystem restoration using the best available science.

The legislation also will drive forward state and federal efforts to modernize California's water-management infrastructure. CALFED is pursuing the construction of new water storage reservoirs, groundwater storage programs, water recycling and conservation programs.

The CALFED program contains many elements to assist Southern California in reducing its use of water from the Colorado River, which will cause water and environmental benefits to ripple up the Colorado River basin to the other six states that rely on the river.

"CALFED's great strength is its requirement of balanced progress toward the primary objectives of ecosystem restoration, water supply and reliability, water quality, and levee system integrity," Norton said. "This legislation reinforces this goal by mandating continuous progress across all program elements." #

TRANSFERS / SACRAMENTO VALLEY

Water transfers protested

Marysville Appeal-Democrat - 10/26/04

By Harold Kruger, staff writer

Citing the threat of water exports from the Sacramento Valley, environmental and other groups are protesting the Bureau of Reclamation's plan to renew Sacramento River settlement contracts for 40 years.

"As proposed, these contracts will encourage water exports which in turn will lead to fewer working farms, lower reservoirs, less boating and fishing recreation, and dry wells," said Michael Jackson, co-chair of the Sacramento Valley Environmental Water Caucus.

A hearing is scheduled Wednesday in Willows.

There are up to 145 contracts for about 1.8 million acre-feet of base supply per year and approximately 380,000 acre-feet of Central Valley Project water per year.

CVP water users in Shasta, Tehama, Butte, Glenn, Colusa, Sutter, Yolo and Sacramento counties are affected.

The Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District is the largest Sacramento Valley CVP contractor at 825,000 acre-feet.

"To ensure that we have the flexibility we'll need to contend with future land use decisions or droughts here in our valley, we should limit the life and amount of these contracts," Jackson said.

The contract renewals are governed by the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act, which allows individual farmers to sell the water that they don't use to grow crops.

The Natural Resources Defense Council contended that the Bureau of Reclamation's own files showed that all but two of the water districts would receive allocations for more water than they have historically used, totaling several hundred thousand acre-feet of water annually.

"Southern California developers are eager for us to export more water to promote more sprawl," said John Merz, co-chair of the Sacramento Valley Environmental Water Caucus. "At the same time, San Joaquin Valley corporate farms want more Sacramento Valley water because recent court decisions in favor of the public trust now require that enough water be left in rivers such as the Trinity and San Joaquin to support their fishery."

Groundwater pumping is not covered in the contracts and there are no clauses prohibiting a farmer from selling their contract water and replacing it with well water.

In the last drought, farmers in the valley used groundwater to replace the surface water that they exported.

"It is not fair to other farmers or to anyone with a well to allow water exports without true groundwater protection laws," said Lynn Barris, a farmer and member of Valley Water Protection Association. "Water districts should only be allowed to use the public's water in the amounts that their farmers need after they have implemented water conservation practices. And they shouldn't be allowed to sell the water they take from our rivers and replace it with additional groundwater pumping."

Fishing clubs, river protection organizations, state and national conservation groups, local business owners and others will provide details of their concerns at the Willows hearing.#

<http://www.appeal-democrat.com/articles/2004/10/26/community/comm4.txt>

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT / WESTLANDS / ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUE

Comment: No place to call home on west side

Fresno Bee - 10/26/04

By Bill McEwen, staff columnist

When growers, lawyers and federal officials negotiated a complicated \$140 million deal that retired thousands of acres of poisoned farmland in Westlands Water District, everybody walked away with something.

Except farmworkers.

Their reward for working land that has fed and clothed millions of people?

Eviction.

"As land retirement takes place, you see the result," says west Fresno County grower Ed O'Neill, whose 5,700-acre ranch is leaving production. "People who have lived on farms their whole lives end up jobless and homeless the same day." O'Neill isn't talking about migrant pickers who follow the crops from region to region. The people he's talking about are foremen, tractor drivers, irrigators and other hands who've lived in rancher-supplied housing for decades.

Somehow, during all of the negotiations plotting the future of Westlands, no one remembered to figure out where farmworkers would live when land was retired.

That has Dora Reyes wondering where her family of nine will move. Her husband has worked 25 years for a ranch that has a row of 10 mustard-colored stucco houses at San Diego and Adams avenues.

"If I could find a place today, I'd move," Reyes says.

Westlands originally said it would retire 200,000 acres. Now it envisions 100,000 retired, leaving 470,000 in production. The district predicts that because of improved water reliability and supply, it will add 3,047 jobs by 2020.

But housing is scarce in west-side communities such as Firebaugh and Mendota.

"If you walk down the main streets, you have one view of town," says Firebaugh City Manager Jose Antonio Ramirez. "But if you walk down the alleys, you see the other side. People are living wherever they can — in garages, in sheds — because there's not enough housing."

Westlands says some evicted families have received \$3,000 in relocation money from ranch owners. The district started working with state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and Fresno County officials this month to see that farmworkers on retired land don't become homeless. The California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation also is involved.

Florez says he hopes to have a relocation plan by the end of November, and Fresno County Supervisor Phil Larson says housing will be available.

"Right now, we know of 20 families on the Murietta Farm who will have to vacate by August of 2005," Larson says. "If they stay in the area, we are going to find housing for them, but they will have to pay for it."

With Florez as their watchdog, the displaced families likely will receive relocation money and find new places to live. Many of them will find work on nearby farms.

But a bigger question remains: Why doesn't Fresno County allow farmworkers to live in subdivisions close to the land they work? Westlands has a bright economic future in the long term and will need workers for years to come.

Yet the county has turned down a proposal by the nonprofit Westside Housing and Economic Network for a subdivision near Westside Elementary School in Five Points. The Habitat for Humanity project, which included land and houses donated by O'Neill, had qualified for two federal grants and a private grant.

The county rejected the offer, saying its general plan required growth to be directed toward cities. In addition, Larson says the land where the subdivision would have gone has water problems.

The county needs to focus on the bigger picture.

Approving rural west-side subdivisions isn't the same as caving into corporate developers and allowing leapfrog sprawl outside Fresno or Clovis. A few rural subdivisions won't stretch public services too thin or spur a land rush in Mendota, Firebaugh and Huron.

Farmworkers should be able to live close to their work instead of driving 50 to 100 miles daily on dangerous, two-lane roads. They should have the opportunity to buy homes.

"The days of the farm labor camps are over because of the regulatory cost," O'Neill says. "There's less housing for farmworkers, and they must drive long distances from town to get to work. They work long, hard hours and are not in shape to be driving those long distances."

You'd think that Fresno County — which touts agriculture as its marquee industry — would want to set the standard for treating farmworkers.

You'd think the county would want to find innovative ways to help workers and agriculture succeed.

You'd think the county would listen to Albert Miller, a Westside Housing and Economic Network board member.

"The farmworker is a segment of society that no one wants to recognize," Miller says. "But without them in the fields, there are no fields."

Right now, the county has the opportunity to address the problem of the west side's rapidly dwindling housing stock for farmworkers.

First, it should team with Westlands to save the homes on retired land instead of seeing them demolished or destroyed by vandals. Many of these homes are clean and sturdy. They should remain occupied or be moved to where they can be lived in again.

Second, the county should reconsider its position on rural, self-help subdivisions, such as the one proposed in Five Points.

Saying no is easy. It takes leadership and ingenuity to solve this complicated problem. #

<http://www.fresnobee.com/columnists/mcewen/story/9335984p-10243095c.html>

GROUNDWATER RESOURCES
Agencies set price on water deal
Critics fear cost increase
Whittier Daily News - 10/25/04
By Mike Sprague, staff writer

CARSON -- Two regional water agencies have agreed on the price one will sell to the other to replenish the underground water basin.

But some representatives of the water utilities say the deal would lock in a price increase -- as much as \$1.50 per year for an average home.

The Central Basin Municipal Water Board on Monday approved the agreement to charge a flat fee of \$800,000 annually for water it sells to the Water Replenishment District of Southern California. The new rate applies to all purchases, no matter how much water the district buys in a year.

Phil Hawkins, a Central Basin board member, said the deal was good for both districts.

"The idea was to get (the replenishment district) to buy more and more water because it becomes cheaper (as they buy more)," he said.

The replenishment district board has yet to act on the agreement.

The district purchases water in order to recharge the underground basin that serves the Southeast area, including water utilities in Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs and Whittier.

The deal would save the replenishment district \$200,000 this year, said Robb Whittaker,

its general manager.

However, Jim Glancy, chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee for the replenishment district, said the deal locks in a price increase the Central Basin imposed on the replenishment district two years ago. The committee represents utilities that pump water in the replenishment district.

At that time, Central Basin raised its surcharge on the water from \$14 per acre-foot to \$37 per acre-foot.

An acre-foot, 326,000 gallons, can be visualized as a football field one-foot deep in water. It also is the amount of water used in a year by an average family of five.

Glancy said there is no real cost for Central Basin to sell the water to recharge the basin, pointing out that the real work is done by Los Angeles County Public Works Department.

Diem Vuong, assistant general manager for Long Beach's Water Department, asked for a study on the costs of selling the water to recharge the basin.

Fernando Paludi, manager of planning and water resources for Central Basin, said the district increased its cost to the replenishment district two years ago because it wanted to charge the same amount for all water users.

Before, the replenishment district paid \$14 per acre-foot and all other water utilities paid \$40 per acre-foot.

Paludi said the surcharge covers all costs of the district.

"It pays for water monitoring, water quality and handing out of ultra-low flush toilets," he said.#

<http://www.whittierdailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,207%257E12026%257E2491848,00.html#>

GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

New well to provide water for San Bruno

San Francisco Examiner - 10/25/04

By Mary F. Albert, staff writer

SAN BRUNO -- After the state Department of Health Services gave San Bruno's newest water well a clean bill of health, the city officially "turned on" Well No. 20 Thursday and started pumping more than 600 gallons of water per minute into kitchen sinks, toilets and bathtubs.

Although San Bruno agreed not to pump water from its four other wells while San Francisco studies the sustainability of the Westside Basin Aquifer -- from which San Bruno, Daly City, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the California Water Service Company all pump water through a conjunctive-use agreement -- the city notified fellow aquifer users that it intends to use its fifth well, which was not originally included in its "no pumping" agreement.

"All parties understand what we are doing," said Public Works Director Scott Munns, who explained that if San Bruno did not use Well No. 20, the city "would not be realizing a return on its investment."

The two-year project to rebuild Well No. 20 cost the city more than \$1 million dollars, estimated city Councilmember Chris Pallas.

"I am really happy we have [the new well] going," said Pallas, who explained that he has raised "all kinds of hell" to ensure San Bruno developed another well capable of producing drinking water.

Pallas had urged the department for years to become self-sufficient in its water consumption, in part because the area is prone to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, but also because the county's current contingency plan includes buying bottled water from commercial distributors around and beyond the Bay Area.

Another rationale for building another well in San Bruno is that pumping well water is significantly cheaper than purchasing it from San Francisco.

A unit consisting of about 748 gallons of well water costs roughly 35 cents to tap, whereas water purchased from San Francisco costs \$1.13 per unit, said Phillip Smith-Hanes, the

interim deputy director of the city's maintenance and operations division.#

http://www.sfexaminer.com/article/index.cfm/i/102504n_well

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

DWR encourages you to conserve water by adjusting your sprinklers to match the season. Please view our 15-second Public Service Announcement, "*Do You Know What Your Sprinklers Have Been Up To?*". - See it at <http://www.water.ca.gov/>

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