



Water News

WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT

MARCH 2016

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Lost water is wasted water

February 29, 2016 | Visalia Times-Delta

Last June, at the height of California's drought, the Center for Investigative Reporting revealed that a homeowner in Bel-Air was using 1,300 gallons of water per hour. Annually, that works out to about 11.8 million gallons – enough water supply for 90 average households.

Reaction was immediate. Water agencies, other homeowners, and the public denounced the waste of water by the unidentified homeowner as careless and irresponsible.

However, the enormous waste of water resulting from state and federal policies dwarf that of this particular homeowner, but receive no scrutiny.

Despite the much-needed rainfall and the snowpack – enough precipitation that some regions experienced flooding and property damage – since January 5, 2016, more than 500,000 acre-feet of water has been allowed to escape capture and “waste” to the ocean. This water was unused, and is now gone forever. To put that into perspective, in approximately six weeks, enough water to supply nearly 1 million Southern California households for one year was simply flushed to the ocean. Some call that lost water. But “lost water” suggests a simple miscalculation, as if the water was accidentally misplaced and possibly could be found. This is wasted water – water intentionally directed out to sea rather than stored for use by families, businesses, and farmers in the San Joaquin Valley and other regions.

As crippling as the lack of rainfall has been over the last 4 years, constraints on operations of water pumping plants in the south Delta imposed by federal agencies – known as the Biological Opinions – have been worse. Federal agencies are using these opinions as the basis for decisions that deprive cities and farms of water in the name of protecting the Delta smelt, salmon, and other native fish. However, despite making the water crisis worse, the regulatory actions have proved to be of no apparent benefit to the fish species. Rather than rebounding or stabilizing, the populations of fish have continued to decline, some to the point where university researchers have concluded the species are, for all practical purposes, extinct.

Pumping restrictions in the south Delta are not new developments – certain restrictions related to the Endangered Species Act have been in place since 1993 and the impacts of a 2008 Biological Opinion and a 2009 Biological Opinion have exacerbated the impact of those earlier restrictions. In 2009, as a result of the combined effects of the first year of the drought and regulatory restrictions, the final allocation for south-of-Delta agricultural water service contractors was 10%. Hundreds of thousands of acres of

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IN THE NEWS

FEINSTEIN-BOXER WATER BILL OFFERS SOME HOPE

Sacramento Bee: Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer introduce new legislation to help shape California's water future.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

Fresno Bee: Westlands Water District Deputy General Manager pens an op-ed to highlight the Westlands' farmers.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

FEDS ALLOCATE WATER FOR ENDANGERED FISH, LEAVE CALIF. FARMERS HIGH AND DRY

The Washington Times: Despite wetter-than-average weather in California, some farmers are looking at another year of a zero federal water allocation.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

STATE WATER BOARD RELEASES PROPOSITION 1 GROUNDWATER GRANT PROGRAM DRAFT GUIDELINES

ACWA: The State Water Resources Control Board has released its Proposition 1 Groundwater Grant Program Draft Guidelines and scheduled a series of public meetings throughout the state to accept public comment on the draft.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)



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CALENDAR

MAR
15

Board Meeting

APR
19

Board Meeting



Westlands Board Member William Bourdeau discusses water issues with Congressman David Valadao.

What's New: Important Notices

2016-2017 CVP Contract Allocation

District staff expects that the initial allocation by the Bureau Reclamation to Central Valley Project south-of-Delta agricultural water service contractors will be 0% for the 2016-2017 water contract year, because no 2016-17 CVP water will have been stored in San Luis Reservoir by March 1, 2016.

If wet hydrologic conditions persist on the San Joaquin River watershed, thereby reducing the impact from the Old and Middle River reverse flow restrictions, the final allocation by Reclamation could be higher. However, any CVP allocation to agricultural water service contractors is expected to be made in the latter part of the spring.

The CVP currently has approximately 4.64 million acre-feet of water in key reservoirs representing approximately 65% of the 15-year average. Storage in the Shasta Reservoir is approximately 2.57 million acre-feet; 85% of normal for this time of year. Federal storage in the San Luis Reservoir is approximately 254,000 acre-feet; 64% of the 15-year average. Jones Pumping Plant is currently operating at about 60% of capacity and has pumped approximately 65,000 acre-feet thus far in February.

In the Spotlight: William Bourdeau

Upon returning from my trip to Washington D.C., I've had time to reflect on the magnitude and importance of fixing our broken water system. Since December 1, 2015, 614,282 acre-feet of fresh water has been flushed into the ocean — an equivalent of approximately 184 billion gallons of water. Instead of that water being available for communities and farming, the water was lost due to an overly cautious interpretation of the Smelt biological opinion. Water is necessary to sustain life not only for Delta Smelt, but for mankind as well. Water for food production and human existence is critically important if we hope to maintain a foundation that will allow people to achieve the American Dream.

It was reassuring to see our elected officials on both sides of the aisle working hard to allocate our precious resources in a way that protects the environment, but also considers human needs. The State of California has long been an engine of economic growth and prosperity. However, unless we all come together as Americans and put forth reasonable solutions to provide for basic necessities like food and water, we will be destined to fail. Are we ready for a dramatic reduction in our quality of life and opportunities for our children?

We find ourselves at a critical juncture, a pivotal moment in our Country's history, a time that will require compromise and bi-partisan cooperation to effect change and fix our broken water system. Nearly everyone is impacted in some way, so we all must take an active role in this effort. How is it possible that so many of us are impacted? Well, California provides nearly 67% of the safe, nutritious and affordable fruits, nuts and vegetables consumed across the United States. Having spent a considerable amount of time working on this issue and recently spending time in Washington D.C. it has become evident to me that our system and the political environment pose significant challenges. However, our Country has overcome these types of challenges in the past and in my view the time for action is now. We must all come together and allow water to flow to farms for a more vibrant economy and stronger American food production capabilities.

Report from D.C. and Sacramento



WASHINGTON D.C.

H.R. 4366 (Valadao CA-21) - Authorizes a settlement to a long-standing dispute between the United States and the Westlands Water District. According to Congressman Valadao, HR 4366 is necessary to approve and authorize the settlement and has the potential to save taxpayers billions of dollars. [READ MORE.](#)

S. 2533 (Feinstein CA) - Creates the California Long-Term Provisions for Water Supply and Short-Term Provisions for Emergency Drought Relief Act. This legislation provides both long- and short-term solutions to California's water supply crisis. [READ MORE.](#)

Garamendi Legislation - Congressman Garamendi announced his intention to introduce legislation to address California's water crisis. According to Garamendi, the legislation will mirror S. 2533 by Senator Feinstein.



CALIFORNIA

SB 1317 (Wolk) - Mandates cities and counties overlying high or medium priority basins establish a process for issuing Conditional Use Permits on the development of groundwater extraction facilities to prevent new wells from contributing to or creating undesirable results. Prohibits Conditional Use Permits for new wells located in a probationary basin and basins subject to overdraft, as defined.

AB 1713 (Eggman) - Prohibits the construction of the California Water Fix unless expressly authorized by an initiative approved in a statewide vote on or after January 1, 2017. Creates a precedent by requiring statewide voter approval of infrastructure projects funded by local public agencies.

AB 2304 (Levine) - Creates the California Water Market Exchange, that would develop a centralized water market platform that would provide ready access to the public to information about water available for transfer or exchange. The Exchange would develop procedures to streamline and expedite transfers and exchanges and prioritize specified projects. The bill sets forth new data requirements conditioning transfer approvals, requires water transfers meet specified environmental and community benefits and authorizes a new fee on water transfers to support the cost of administering this statute.

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productive farmland had to be fallowed; thousands of people who live and work in agriculture lost their jobs; unemployment rates skyrocketed; and communities faced issues of increased poverty and homelessness.

The good news from our rainy January is that water storage in our reservoirs is increasing compared to last year. But that is far from ideal. Data from the California Department of Water Resources shows that the state's average capture is only at 66 percent.

Is history repeating itself? For two years, thousands of farmers that rely on the Central Valley Project received a zero water allocation. That's zero – as in none. Now it appears that they will receive a zero allocation for a third straight year, while 500,000 acre-feet of water was flushed to the ocean with no apparent benefit to the fish.

Most people in the state think that because of the rainy days and increasing snowpack, the water crisis will be over this year. They think that because it seems logical. But thanks to the actions of the federal fish agencies, the people of California are going to get a hell of an education this summer.

Californians cannot afford to waste water. And last April, Governor Brown proposed fines for residents and businesses that wasted the water as California cities tried to meet mandatory conservation targets. But the prohibition against waste must apply to all uses of water, regardless of the purpose for which the water is used. The governor doesn't have to look very far for one of the worst offenders: regulatory agencies. It's not only that nameless resident of Bel Air who should be shamed for wasting water.

Johnny Amaral
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