



Water News

WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT

SEPTEMBER 2016

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Setting the Record Straight, Compelling an Honest Discussion

Everyone knows that California's water system is broken and has been broken for many years. Despite the worsening conditions, the defenders of the status quo have succeeded in focusing attention elsewhere. Now, Westlands Water District, and many of you, have become more active in the policy arena, no longer willing to allow the opponents of farming to dominate the media coverage and avoid responsibility for the mess they have created. Unfortunately, years of biased coverage and attacks on agriculture will not be corrected overnight, but we are making a difference.

One communication effort Westlands has initiated is the *Food for Thought* bulletin that we produce on a weekly basis. The bulletin is designed to push back aggressively on misinformation, expose the consequences of the failed water policies, and provide information about important news. With the philosophy that farmers can no longer stay quiet and let false information stand, the bulletin is dedicated to engaging in the water debate at every level.

Recently, a prominent California newspaper repeated the charge that agriculture uses 80% of the state's available water supply. In response, Westlands released a bulletin showing that the majority of the water was used for environmental purposes and quoted the Congressional Research Service, the non-partisan government think tank, which stated that "the state's agricultural sector uses less available water than many media reports claim."

Westlands and several growers also responded recently to a UC Davis Study that measured the impact of the drought on agriculture and the state economy. While the report only measured the impact of the hydrologic drought, not the government-imposed drought, some media and others mischaracterized the report as evidence that the situation was improving for San Joaquin communities. Westlands and the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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and join the conversation today.



IN THE NEWS

CA'S WATER SYSTEM IN NEED OF A FIX

Capitol Weekly: Family farmer Jim Anderson points out this year's wet winter exposed the failure of the current water system and the lack of a cohesive federal and state plan to secure water for California.

[READ THE FULL OP-ED](#)

THE BACKSTORY OF A WATER SCARE YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT

Bakersfield Californian: Columnist Lois Henry explains the Central Valley Project and how millions of Californians nearly had their water supply shut off in July.

[READ THE FULL COLUMN](#)

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING

The Hill: Los Banos farmer Cannon Michael explains why so many people are frustrated with politics as usual and are demanding that things change.

[READ THE FULL OP-ED](#)

STATE FIGHTS ITSELF OVER FISH, BUT WE COULD BE THE REAL LOSERS

Modesto Bee: The Bee's Editorial Board calls out the California Fish & Game Commission's efforts to save a "native species."

[READ THE FULL EDITORIAL](#)

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CALENDAR

SEP
20

WWD Board Meeting

OCT
18

WWD Board Meeting

WESTLANDS FACT SHEETS

Westlands has prepared several new fact sheets to provide more information about the District and critical issues facing our growers. We are distributing these documents to elected officials, the media, and interested parties to provide our point of view and to refute the misinformation about the District and our farming operations. We will showcase these fact sheets in the Westlands monthly newsletter in the coming months. Please let us know if you need copies of the fact sheets for events or meetings you are attending.



Westlands Water District is recruiting to fill a General Counsel position at our Sacramento Office

Applications are being accepted now through Monday, October 31, 2016. The General Counsel is an executive management position appointed by the Board of Directors. The General Counsel is responsible for management of the District's legal affairs and provides legal advice to the Board of Directors, the District President, the District General Manager, and other officers and senior management of the District. For more information please visit the Westlands website [here](#).

What's New: Important Notices

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Update

The Westlands Water District's Board of Directors elected to file a Notice of Intent to serve as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) on July 19, 2016. Serving as the GSA will promote local management of our groundwater resources. On August 3, 2016, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) posted the District's GSA formation notification on their website [here](#), which starts the 90-day posting period. DWR is expected to select the District as the exclusive GSA of the Westside Subbasin on November 1, 2016, if no other eligible overlapping agency applies for GSA status within the management area. The next steps in the District's SGMA implementation are completing the hydrogeologic groundwater model, hosting a series of facilitated workshops with interested parties and developing an Interim Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) of the GSA management area. Please contact Kiti Campbell at (559) 241-6226 for additional information.

PRESS RELEASE:

UC Davis Study Proves Government-Caused Drought Far Worse Than Drought Caused By Mother Nature

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority and the Westlands Water District released a statement on Tuesday, August 16th responding to a recently-released UC Davis study that proves failed government policies, not a lack of rainfall and snowpack, are responsible for the widespread water shortages and the following of hundreds of thousands of acres of land.

[Read the full statement here.](#)

Congressman Nunes Hosts Water Forum

In August, Congressman Devin Nunes hosted a water forum in Tulare to discuss the Central Valley's limited water supply and the state's complex water policies. The event included a panel moderated by radio host Ray Appleton, with Congressman David Valadao, Westlands Water District's Johnny Amaral, Friant Water Authority's Jason Phillips, and Merced County farmer Kole Upton. With nearly a thousand people in attendance, Nunes argued that the Valley's best hope for resolving the 2.5 million acre-foot water shortfall is for our elected officials, ag groups, and water districts to unify behind a common agenda of reforming the Endangered Species Act, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, and the San Joaquin River Settlement, as well as building a myriad new water storage projects.

Congressman Nunes urged Valley residents to support ballot measures to build more dams and water storage projects in the state. "There is not a shortage of water in this state; there is a shortage of leadership. There is plenty of water in this state, and we need to get it to this area so that we can continue to farm. And if not, we're going to have to idle about a million acres of land," said Nunes.

Read about the forum [here](#).



Water Forum
Photo: Visalia Times-Delta



Congressman Nunes
Photo: Alexandre Azevedo

pushed back with a press release stating, with regard to the chronic water supply shortage that, "mother nature's effect pales in comparison to the government's water supply policies."

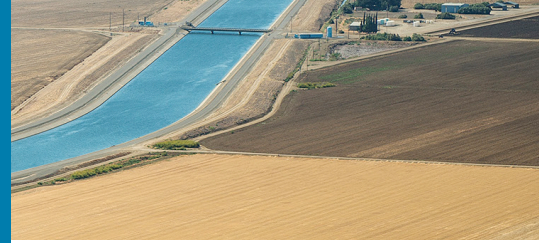
To clarify their findings, UC Davis published a document entitled, *Clarifications on estimates of irrigated cropland idled due to 2016 California drought*. The report stated the following: "It is important to highlight that we did not attempt to quantify the amount of land idled that can be attributed to government regulations or agency decisions that relate to the broad long-term water and environmental conditions in California."

While we do not agree with their methodology used (separating drought conditions from regulatory restrictions), the numerous responses they received, including our correspondence, brought about a higher level of accountability which in turn prompted their response. Read their response [HERE](#).

We end every bulletin with the following statement that sums up our desire to confront the issues: ***It's time for honesty in the very worthwhile debate about how YOUR water is being prioritized.***

Please let us know your ideas about creating an honest and productive debate on California's water future.

Johnny Amaral
Deputy General Manager
of External Affairs
Westlands Water District



Statewide Leaders:

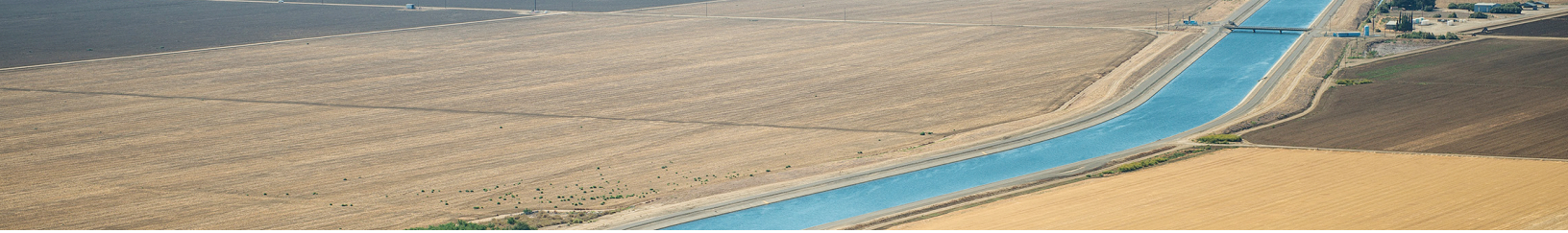
Setting the Standard for Drainage Management and Environmental Protection.

DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT

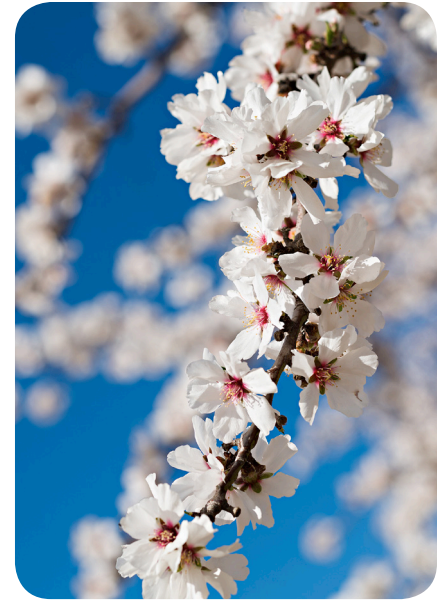
As one of the oldest problems facing irrigated agriculture worldwide, drainage management is especially important in the Westlands area due to naturally-occurring salt found in Delta waters and west side soil. Without proper drainage and disposal, this saline water can impact the root zones and germination of plants, preventing crop growth and reducing yields. Westlands' salinity and drainage concerns are complicated by soil structure in areas where dense clay layers of varying depth and thickness restrict natural drainage. This causes an accumulation of unused irrigation water above the clay layers, resulting in a near-surface water table.



- Over the years, Westlands farmers have become highly proficient at implementing water and soil testing for data and solutions related to ground salinity. We have developed expertise in sustainable methods for managing the salt load from irrigation drainage, including innovative cultivation techniques – sometimes called “precision agriculture” – that keep farms operating at peak water-efficiency and cut dust pollution. Local farmers have also mastered field elevation, slope (grade), and topography assessment techniques which also impacts drainage.
- Westlands farmers have also prioritized the nexus between water efficiency and crop-shifting. Other than permanent crops such as trees and orchards, which cannot be easily fallowed, farmers are using scientific data and technology to better pinpoint when, where and how much to irrigate, and are concentrating water instead on less water dependent crops.
- Westlands is a leader in water conservation: transitioning to drip irrigation; using cover crops and no-tillage for better soil health and reduced water usage; employing GPS and possibly drones to pinpoint inefficiencies in irrigation; and funding plant science where genetic engineering could help crops withstand drought.
- To address drainage issues, Westlands employs intense irrigation management techniques restricting deep percolation to the absolute minimum needed to maintain a salt balance and choosing a crop rotation and cultural management regime to minimize the required percolation. Salinity is managed with a unique and advanced management of salinity testing, seed germination, infiltration and crop selection.
- Since 1985, Westlands has studied a number of available or emerging drainage technologies, at a cost of over \$8 million, including land application, evaporation and solar ponds, biological selenium removal, a deep injection well, cogeneration, agroforestry, and upper zone pumping. Advanced water management techniques implemented by Westlands growers have reduced deep percolation below the crops' root zone and lessened the immediate impacts of the lack of artificial drainage.



- To help meet state and federal requirements, Westlands Water District supports restoring 8,000 acres of wetland habitat in the Delta.
- When approved by Congress, a 2015 settlement between the United States Department of Justice and Westlands Water District will end a decades-long dispute over the federal government's obligation to provide drainage for Central Valley farmers receiving water from the San Luis Unit of the Central Valley Project (CVP). The agreement provides in part that Westlands Water District will take full responsibility for managing drainage in the District by implementing comprehensive drainage solutions to preserve the soil and reducing the volume of drain water, resulting in positive environmental outcomes. Under the agreement, Westlands will compensate landowners within the District affected by historical drainage issues, saving government and taxpayer resources.



- The San Joaquin Valley region is home to an abundance of natural resources, including numerous fish and animals. Endangered fish species in the Delta are protected; however, implementation of those protections have significantly curtailed water supply.
- With other public water agencies that depend on water supplies pumped through the Delta, Westlands purchased approximately 3,500 acres of land in the Delta and restored approximately 2,000 acres to tidal marshland habitat to benefit native fish species that either inhabit the Delta or rely upon the Delta for part of their life cycle.
- Westlands has also participated in other initiatives, such as funding California game wardens, to help the Department of Fish and Game address poaching and other violations of the fish and game code that affect at-risk species.