



Water News

WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT

OCTOBER 2016

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Don't Blame Farmers for California's Water Crisis

A recent story in the *Sacramento Bee* detailed the predicament that farmers now face in keeping their farms and businesses afloat. The article described how farmers were pumping groundwater to offset the lack of water deliveries from the Central Valley Project and other government programs that were built to deliver water. Unfortunately, the article and subsequent editorial created a false impression that growers were to blame for pumping groundwater and the environmental impacts that have resulted.


The *Bee* left out a critical part of the story – the fact that growers are pumping groundwater because the entire state is relying on an outdated state infrastructure, the water projects have been grossly mismanaged, and decision-makers have failed to provide adequate flexibility in the water system operations to allow water supply to reach its intended users.

In **our response** to the *Bee*, Westlands Water District exposed the absurdity of ignoring the failed policies that are creating water shortages throughout the state while attacking farmers and others for clinging to the only water option they have left. There needs to be more truth in the debate over water resources and an acknowledgement that the real problem is the continued failure of government to fix a system that everyone acknowledges is broken.

“No other California industry that depends on water for business operations received such a harsh penalty when so much water was available.”

To read my full response in *The Fresno Bee*, [CLICK HERE](#).

Johnny Amaral
Deputy General Manager of External Affairs
Westlands Water District

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IN THE NEWS

FARMERS MUST PUMP GROUNDWATER

Sacramento Bee: Westside farmer Daniel Errotabere writes a letter to the editor in response to a *Bee* editorial on the reason why Central Valley farmers have resorted to using groundwater.

[READ LETTER TO THE EDITOR](#)

VALLEY LEADERS TAKE ISSUE WITH STATE WATER BOARD'S EXPLANATION

Modesto Bee: State water officials explain the revised Substitute Environmental Document, a proposal to take twice as much water from the San Joaquin Valley than the state already does.

[READ THE FULL EDITORIAL](#)

CALIFORNIA FARM REVENUE PLUMMETS AFTER YEARS OF DROUGHT

SF Gate: Agriculture officials warn that a fifth year of drought could continue to drive down ag earnings and ultimately hurt the state's economy.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

END OF SUMMER FINDS CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY IN BETTER SHAPE, BUT CRITICAL SHORTAGES REMAIN

ABC 30: Water supplies are up across the state, but it's a much different situation on the west side, where the San Luis Reservoir remains near a historic low.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

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CALENDAR

OCT
18

WWD Board Meeting

OCT
31

SGMA Workshop

NOV
15

WWD Board Meeting

What's New: Important Notices

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Update

Westlands Water District has scheduled a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) workshop on Monday, October 31st at 1:00 p.m., at the District's Five Points Field Office. District staff will outline GSP regulations, GSP frame work to achieve sustainability of the Westside Subbasin, and provide interested parties a forum to provide comments and ideas on the District's GSP development.

Please contact Kiti Campbell at (559) 241-6226 for additional information.

Community Food Bank's Empty Bowls, Full Hearts Benefit Dinner

The Community Food Bank will host its annual Empty Bowls, Full Hearts Benefit Dinner on Thursday, November 10th at The Grand, located at 1401 Fulton Street in Fresno. Westlands Water District is a

proud sponsor of this annual event and the Community Food Bank's efforts to end hunger in the Central Valley by providing food to more than 180 agencies in Fresno, Madera, Kings, Kern and Tulare Counties. The benefit dinner will include an auction to help "Feed a Family" with an opportunity to give a 100% tax-deductible gift. Guests will take home unique ceramic bowls hand-crafted by local students.

For more information contact Renée Nuanes at rnuanes@communityfoodbank.net or go online [HERE](#).



Westlands Water District is recruiting to fill a General Counsel position

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](#).

The District is also requesting proposals for the following services:

- Management Consulting Services
- General Counsel Legal Services

PRESS RELEASE:

End of Water Year Statement: The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Calls for Congressional Action to Avoid Devastating Repeat of 2016 Water Allocations

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) diversion of water supplies from San Joaquin Valley farms to other uses has led to an unprecedented water supply imbalance and necessitates immediate state and federal government action to avoid a repeat of the problem in 2017, according to the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority.

"Reclamation will end this water year with over 4 million acre-feet of water in Northern California reservoirs and an IOU for over 300,000 acre-feet of water borrowed from individual farmers south of the Delta," said Jason Peltier, executive director of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority.

In 2016, federal fishery agencies mandated Reclamation severely cut water delivery to more than 2 million acres of farms in California's San Joaquin Valley. Water quantities beyond reasonable estimates required for fishery protection have been held in Lake Shasta. About \$340 million worth of water conserved or purchased by individual farmers was taken by Reclamation to help fulfill its contractual and statutory obligations to deliver water, leaving an estimated 340,000 acre-foot deficit in San Luis Reservoir that would normally be delivered to irrigate crops. This water has yet to be returned and, as a result, more than 50 water agencies are unlikely to receive a sufficient 2017 allocation irrespective of winter weather.

"The problem of chronic, regulatory water supply shortages used to be isolated to the Westside but in recent years has grown to affect more and more farms across the Valley, including now the CVP's Friant Division," Peltier added.

While federal fishery agencies have mismanaged much of California's water supply in their attempt to protect threatened and endangered fish, populations of the protected species have continued to decline. State and federal agencies must change course to fulfill their responsibility to protect the environment and provide water supplies for the people who depend on them. Continuing the past quarter century of failed fish protection policy is unacceptable.

"Over the last nine years, we've been forced to make do with inadequate water supplies based on the multi-year drought and environmental restrictions. But having this year's miniscule 5 percent allocation diverted to other entities as a result of poor planning and management underscores the need for immediate Congressional action to help guide the federal fishery agencies toward a more balanced outcome. It's clear at this point that the people and communities served by the Central Valley Project are not a priority to the federal government and that the continuing regulatory drought is intolerable," Peltier said.

Historically, constraints on Central Valley water allocations have been directly related to two factors: the need to hold water in Lake Shasta to ensure sufficient cold water is available to support salmon reproduction and the pumping restrictions imposed by the 2008 Delta smelt and 2009 salmon Biological Opinions. Since December of 2015, these restrictions have caused over 1 million acre-feet of water to flow to the ocean that was otherwise available for water users throughout most of California.

Read the full statement [here](#).

WESTLANDS' FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE WEEKLY REPORT ON CALIFORNIA'S BROKEN WATER SYSTEM

To illustrate the failure of current water policy and demonstrate the dire need for a reliable solution, we have established a weekly bulletin called "Food for Thought." Each bulletin highlights the broken water system. The bulletin is shared with an extensive list of media, congressional contacts, the ag community, growers and third party stakeholders on a weekly basis with the intention of better informing the public. For example, a recent bulletin addressed an article that blamed farmers for pumping groundwater, explaining how farmers only use groundwater as a last resort when they are denied water that they are contractually entitled.

To review this Food for Thought and others, [click here](#).