



UNDERGROUND

Association of Ground Water Agencies Newsletter

Fall 1999

Water bond on March 2000 ballot, public education is key

As the Legislature was quite literally heading out of town September 10 at the end of the session, a bill authorizing a \$1.97 billion water bond issue for next March's election was approved and sent to the Governor. It has been signed.

The bond contains a long list of projects for flood control, watershed protection, clean water and water conservation. Opponents had criticized the bond for a lack of money for additional water storage, but those objections were overcome when Gov. Davis promised \$20 million for reservoir studies in next year's state budget.

A statewide poll August 4 showed that 77 percent of voters would support a water bond. However, other bond measures have also been authorized for the March ballot. As a result, Californians will be asked to support a total of about \$5 billion in bonds. The water bond may not look so attractive in that context.

The survey indicated that, along with water, parks got the highest support from voters with a 72 percent figure.

According to a fact sheet published by the Association of California Water Agencies, cities, farms and the environment all will gain if the water bond passes. It will provide nearly a million acre-feet of "new" dry-year water supply. It will also make important improvements to water quality and stabilize the core water supplies in the Bay-Delta.

Some of the water supply benefits included in the bond are:

- Southern California Integrated Watershed Program, proposed by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), \$235 million, providing 400,000 acre-feet of "new" water annually;

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Water bond on March 2000 ballot, public education is key (page 1)
- Orange County WD targets animal wastes that threaten groundwater quality (page 2)
- AGWA Actions (page 3)
- State increases efforts to keep pesticides out of groundwater (page 3)
- Orange County to get \$1.5 million in federal funds for groundwater replenishment (page 4)
- What's on THE DOCKET (page 4)
- Groundwater information update, new edition of DWR Bulletin 118 getting underway (page 5)
- San Bernardino Groundwater Event Focuses on Bunker Hill Basin (page 5)
- Videos, Educational Materials Available from Water Education Foundation. (page 6)
- Looking Back After Four Years with a Groundwater Management (page 6)
- Metropolitan says it's ready for Y2K (page 7)
- AGWA member agency achieves state's top safety program (page 7)

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- Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto Watershed Program, \$15 million, 2,000 acre-feet;
- Groundwater Storage Program, \$200 million, 300,000 acre-feet;
- Bay/Delta Multi-Purpose Water Management Program, \$250 million, 125,000 acre-feet;
- Interim Reliable Water Supply and Water Quality Infrastructure and Management Program, \$180 million, 100,000 acre-feet;
- Water Conservation, \$155 million, 50,000 - 100,000 acre-feet;
- Water Recycling, \$40 million, 20,000 acre-feet.

Water agency officials have noted that it is important to make the public aware of the enormous

benefits of the water bond and of the huge number of varied projects that will be funded from it. Prop. 204 that passed in 1996 was the first major water infrastructure bond to be presented to California taxpayers in several decades. The support it received is encouraging to those who support the new bond measure.

“While water is not always foremost in people’s minds on a daily basis,” one official commented, “the people realize how critical it is when a proposal is presented to them logically and completely. If water organizations will make that same level of effort to inform the public this time, the bond will pass,” he said.

Orange County WD targets animal wastes that threaten groundwater quality

Orange County Water District (OCWD) has targeted dairies in the Chino Basin that threaten the quality of water for downstream users like OCWD.

Orange County takes much of its groundwater from the Santa Ana River, and there is a high density of animals in the Chino area, upstream from the groundwater users.

OCWD says the dairies are violating current state and federal laws. The district has urged the governing Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board to address the rainfall and dairy density issues.

According to OCWD, increased monitoring and stronger enforcement of laws controlling animal waste are needed because water quality is suffering and clean-up costs wind up being shifted from those causing the problem to those using the water.

Specifically, OCWD has requested:

- A prohibition on the ground application of manure within the Chino Basin.
- Preparation and implementation of engineered waste management plans for all dairies.
- Removal of all manure from a dairy’s facility within 90 days of taking the manure from the corrals.
- Lowering of density limits of dairy animals.
- Making the 25-year, 24-hour storm event standards comply with federal standards. This involves the uncontrolled spread of waste in the event of major storms.

The regional board estimates that Chino Basin dairies produce more than 770,000 tons of manure every year. Salts and nitrates in the manure degrade the water quality in the Santa Ana basin.



September 27 ... The Board of Directors, meeting in Rancho Cucamonga at the Chino Basin Watermaster's office, heard a presentation by Jeanine Jones of the Department of Water Resources on plans to update DWR's Bulletin 118 on California's groundwater (more details elsewhere in this edition of *Notes from the Underground*) heard Dirk Reed of Metropolitan Water District outline MWD's plans for Colorado River Aqueduct groundwater storage programs. The program now centers on three basins: Cadiz Valley, Hayfield Valley and Fenner Valley.

August 23 ... Board members at the meeting in Rancho Cucamonga were updated on Metropolitan Water District's strategic planning process by MWD's Manager of the Water Resources Management Group, Steve Arakawa. He discussed the four strategies being considered for MWD's future structure. MWD is hoping to adopt its policy objectives this fall, but implementation may take as much as two years heard Mr. Arakawa summarize MWD's groundwater storage principles for conjunctive use, which are being coordinated with the strategic planning process. MWD recognizes the importance of groundwater storage. MWD has two key objectives in establishing groundwater storage projects: provision of a regional benefit, and assurance its member agencies won't be harmed received a briefing by Mel Blevins, Upper Los Angeles River Area Watermaster, on the activities of his agency, including management of several groundwater basins. He discussed challenges of dealing with producers who are not parties to the adjudication agreement. Mr. Blevins also highlighted several groundwater cleanup programs in the basin noted that the Regional Water Quality Control Board in the Chino area recently required agricultural and farming interests to implement manure removal plans within two years. It was noted that dairies are gradually moving out of the area. Confined animal wastes are getting increasing attention from water quality regulators because of the impacts of dairies, stockyards and similar concentrations of animals in a small area.

July 19 ... AGWA's Directors met at the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster office and approved membership in AGWA for Calleguas Municipal Water District. Calleguas had been an AGWA founding member, then had withdrawn its membership for several years, and was now reapplying. The new member is a wholesale water agency in Ventura County. It is a part of the Las Posas Basin Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project and is actively involved in watershed and groundwater management programs received a report from vice chair Ron Palmer on Metropolitan Water District's reorganization plan and its strategic planning process. Many AGWA members are also MWD member agencies or are affected by MWD actions held a discussion of progress in the CALFED process related to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay/Delta, noting that assurances on water quality and reliability issues are extremely important noted that the Groundwater Management Committee is hard at work on a spreadsheet reflecting critical information about groundwater basins in the AGWA region.

State increases efforts to keep pesticides out of groundwater

Cal/EPA's Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) has launched a major new initiative to protect groundwater from pesticides.

"When the department began its groundwater program nearly 20 years ago, scientists had little solid data about how pesticides moved into groundwater," said DPR Director Paul E. Helliker.

"As a result, our program didn't focus on prevention. It's time to take a more preventive approach," Helliker commented.

DPR scientists have conducted innovative research to identify the factors that drive pesticides into groundwater. As a result, the agency says they can now identify areas of the state that are vulnerable to groundwater contamination because of weather, soil, crops and other factors.

In the future, DPR says, its focus will be on keeping pesticides out of groundwater. For the first time, the agency will require specific groundwater protection measures in all areas sensitive to con-

tamination, not just in areas where pesticides have been detected.

This new approach not only allows DPR to identify land sensitive to contamination, but also provides information on the mechanism of pesticide movement to groundwater. Information can then be used to customize crop management practices, including tailoring specific pesticide application and irrigation methods, to protect groundwater in these sensitive areas.

“DPR plans to replace the patchwork of ‘pesticide management zones’ with a more science-based program,” Helliker said. “We can now identify larger, contiguous areas of land as sensitive to contamination and in these areas, specific use practices would be required to protect groundwater.”

For further information on this project, contact Mark Pepple of DPR’s Environmental Monitoring and Pest Management Branch, (916) 324-4100, or by e-mail at mpepple@cdpr.ca.gov.

Orange County to get \$1.5 million in federal funds for groundwater replenishment

The President’s fiscal year 2000 budget is expected to contain \$1.5 million for Orange County’s Groundwater Replenishment (GWR) System.

The system will provide Orange County residents with a new source of purified water to serve up to 200,000 families each year. It will take highly treated wastewater from Orange County Sanitation District and purify it to near-distilled water quality through reverse osmosis, microfiltration and ultraviolet disinfection technologies.

The water will then be injected into an underground seawater intrusion barrier as well as percolated into the county’s groundwater basin.

The GWR System will be located on the joint water campus of Orange County Water District and Orange County Sanitation District in Fountain Valley. The system will provide 100,000 acre-feet of new water for the county.

What's on THE DOCKET?

The State Legislature has adjourned for 1999. During the year, numerous bills related to water were introduced. Of those, AGWA particularly followed or took positions on seven. Here’s what happened to those specific bills:

AB (Assembly Bill) 303: *Supported by AGWA.* Assembly member Thompson’s bill to provide funding for local groundwater management activities has passed both houses and gone to the Governor for signature. (At the time this was written, the Governor had not yet acted. However, he was expected to sign the bill.)

AB 524: *No position by AGWA.* Assembly member Machado’s bill that would strengthen provisions of endangered species legislation. Re-referred to the Senate Resources and Wildlife Committee, which means it’s dead for this year.

AB 1605: *Supported by AGWA.* Assembly member Margett’s bill to provide research funding for desalination of Colorado River water and other brackish water passed both houses and has been sent to the Governor for signature. (The Governor is expected to sign.)

SB (Senate Bill) 227: *No position by AGWA.* Senator Alpert’s bill on non-point source pollution has gone to the Governor for signature. (Signature is expected.)

SB 390: *No position by AGWA.* Another bill by Senator Alpert, this one addressing water quality, waste discharge and imposing higher fees. This bill has also gone to the Governor for signature, but had not been signed as of the date this was written.

SB 506: *No position by AGWA.* Senator Peace’s far-reaching bill on water wheeling conveyances and charges. It would particularly affect MWD in the southern California area. This bill was referred back to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, so it will not be acted upon this year.

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SB 989: Supported by AGWA. Senator Sher's bill to eliminate MTBE from gasoline by 2002. This bill has been "chapters," meaning it was signed by the Governor and will become law on Jan. 1, 2000.

State Water Bond: The Assembly voted Sept. 10 to place a \$1.97 Billion bond measure on the March 2000 ballot. If approved, it will significantly affect the water infrastructure in the state. See a more detailed article elsewhere in this issue of *Notes from the Underground*.

Now is the time to contact your local legislator with suggestions for legislation for the 2000 term.

Groundwater information update, new edition of DWR Bulletin 118 getting underway

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has launched a three-year effort to improve the quality of information available on the state's nearly 500 groundwater basins.

Under the authority of legislation enacted this year, the department will prepare a statewide inventory of groundwater data, develop a "model" groundwater management ordinance for local governments and create guidelines for evaluating local groundwater management plans.

AGWA directors heard a presentation on the project by DWR's Jeanine Jones at their September 27 meeting in Rancho Cucamonga.

The project is expected to take three years, with a draft report to be released for public review in 2001, and a final report - to be issued as a revised DWR Bulletin 118 - ready in 2002.

The department will synthesize data collected from local water agencies with information maintained by DWR, such as statewide water supply and water use data and information from reports filed by well drillers.

More information about the project is available from Debra Carlisle, project manager, (916) 653-9493, or by e-mail at carlisle@water.ca.gov.

San Bernardino Groundwater Event Focuses on Bunker Hill Basin

A day-long workshop September 30 in San Bernardino addressed management of the Bunker Hill groundwater basin in that region.

About 130 people attended the workshop hosted by San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBVWCD).

The event's announced theme got the attention it was designed to: "Balancing the Groundwater Basin; Can We Have It All?"

Issues have become increasingly complex with changes in the area. The sponsor, SBVWCD, needed input on many of those issues in order to ensure it has the right amount of water in the right places at the right times.

Among the many subjects addressed were changes in groundwater levels, water rights, water quality and environmental issues. Also discussed were mining, multiple land ownership in recharge areas and the impact of the soon-operational Seven Oaks Dam.

Sixteen speakers and panelists tackled the topics. Among them were retired state Senator Ruben Ayala, who had attempted 15 years ago to bring local agencies together to address groundwater issues.

Also speaking were AGWA's President, William R. Mills, Jr., communications consultant Robert Rauch, and SBVWCD General Manager D. Burnell Cavender.

Videos, Educational Materials Available from Water Education Foundation

The highly respected Water Education Foundation in Sacramento has produced two new groundwater videos that are available to interested parties.

Groundwater Quality is a 15-minute program designed to give the layperson an introduction to how groundwater quality is maintained. It gives clear, easy-to-understand explanations of the problems plaguing groundwater, such as subsidence and contamination, as well as offering solutions.

Additionally, this video outlines groundwater quality management on the federal, state and local levels.

Conjunctive Use is 11 minutes long and provides viewers with an overview of the often-misunderstood concept of conjunctive use — coordinating surface water and groundwater supplies which are often managed as separate resources. The presentation outlines an important concept integral to management of California's water supply: groundwater banking.

Also profiled are extraction rights, groundwater recharge techniques and the potential impacts of conjunctive use on water quality. The video was partially funded by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

Both videos are ideal for presentations and community group meetings.

The foundation also provides a variety of other educational groundwater materials. The *Layperson's Guide to Groundwater* is an excellent and thorough resource of all angles of groundwater in California, from history to problems and management. For specific details on the geographic regions of California possessing groundwater supplies, the 24" x 36" full-color *Groundwater Map* with cut-aways illustrating saltwater intrusion, contamination, overdraft and fractured rock is available.

Copies of any WEF materials can be ordered at very reasonable prices by contacting the foundation by mail at 717 K Street, Suite 317, Sacramento 95814; by phone at (916) 444-6240; or on the Internet at www.water-ed.org.

Looking Back After Four Years with a Groundwater Management Plan

(Fifth and last in a series on the successful development and implementation of an AB 3030 groundwater management plan)

In the four years since adoption of the West San Jacinto Groundwater Basin Management Plan, substantial progress has been made on several fronts.

Of particular significance is the compilation of extensive water quality, water level and groundwater production data — both historic and current. Monitoring programs provide current data on 166 wells for water levels, 130 for water quality, and 95 for extraction data. Extensive historical data has also been compiled.

By involving the local communities and respecting and recognizing the land owners and water rights holders, this cooperative effort is assured success. Benefits include less reliance on imported water, cost savings and avoidance, potential "new" water, water quality improvement, protection of local resources, maximized use of resources and protection of groundwater rights.

The plan would not have succeeded without public involvement. The focus was EMWD's willingness to modify the plan to accommodate concerns of private groundwater producers.

Another key element was education on the need for a plan, the problems existing in the groundwater subbasins and anticipated future problems if nothing was done. Assurances not to interfere with rights of private producers and the cooperative nature of plan development were also stressed.

Of greater importance, an element of trust was developed, and it is considered critical to follow

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through with implementation in a manner consistent with that trust.

This award-winning management plan has been successful as a result of its cooperative nature and because all interested and affected parties were able to provide input that was respected, considered, and frequently implemented. It is an historic development that will ensure water for domestic and agricultural users, help protect the vested interests of existing groundwater producers, provide a framework for new water supply projects for the benefit of the private groundwater producers and the public, and ensure the economic viability of the region.

(We apologize for an error in the previous newsletter's article on this subject. EMWD's AB 3030 plan was not the first implemented in California. However, it was one of the first comprehensive AB 3030 plans enacted in the state. Your editor's wrist has been duly smacked.)

Metropolitan says it's ready for Y2K

Officials at Metropolitan Water District have proclaimed "all systems go" for Y2K readiness of the district's complex water distribution system.

"Our water delivery, operations and critical business systems are ready for the millennium," said Assistant General Manager Joseph Tait. "Water service will not be interrupted and business will go on as usual Jan. 1, 2000."

Metropolitan's sprawling system includes 775 miles of pipeline and aqueduct, five state-of-the-art treatment facilities, 15 hydroelectric power plants, eight storage reservoirs and other delivery systems.

"Southern Californians depend on reliable, safe drinking water. Metropolitan can't afford any system breakdowns that jeopardize public health," Tait said. The systems that safeguard water quality are also fully Y2K ready.

Contingency plans have been developed for a variety of scenarios. Ways to manually operate systems have been outlined. Plans call for a heightened alert period from 8 p.m. December 31 to 8 a.m. Jan. 1, 2000.

AGWA member agency achieves state's top safety program

AGWA member agency Eastern Municipal Water District has become the first public agency ever awarded Cal/OSHA's coveted "Cal/Star" recognition.

Only eight other organizations throughout California, all large industrial employers, have previously achieved this level of cooperative labor-management safety program.

"When our employees work under safe conditions, there are obvious benefits to them. Management benefits because there are fewer worker absences due to illness or injury. And our customers benefit because workers' compensation, insurance and medical costs are lower, and that's reflected in the water and sewer rates customers pay," notes EMWD President David J. Slawson.

Eastern was established in 1950, and it has never experienced an on-the-job fatal injury. The district's work force has grown to 484 employees who have accumulated more than 21 1/2 million work hours during that 49-year period.

"The award is great, but now we need to maintain that level and go beyond it," says EMWD's Safety and Risk Manager, Jack Eastwood. "What's even greater is that the real experts — Cal/OSHA — have verified that we have a safety and health program that is better than all but a handful of employers throughout the state."