

REVISED – NOTICE AND AGENDA

Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees

SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1

will be held at **3:00 P.M., Tuesday, October 20, 2026**

1070 Faraday Street, Santa Ynez, CA - Conference Room

Notice Regarding Public Participation: For those who may not attend the meeting but wish to provide public comment on an Agenda Item, please submit any and all comments and written materials to the District via electronic mail at general@syrwd.org. All submittals should indicate “**October 20, 2026 Board Meeting**” in the subject line. Materials received by the District during and prior to the meeting will become part of the post-meeting Board packet materials available to the public and posted on the District’s website.

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTING OF THE NOTICE AND AGENDA**
4. **ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS, IF ANY, TO THE AGENDA**
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT** - Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any non-Agenda matter within the District’s jurisdiction. The total time for all public participation shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes and the time allotted for each individual shall not exceed three (3) minutes. The District is not responsible for the content or accuracy of statements made by members of the public. No action will be taken by the Board on any public comment item.
6. **CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2026**
7. **CONSENT AGENDA** - All items listed on the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine and will be approved or rejected in a single motion without separate discussion. Any item placed on the Consent Agenda can be removed and placed on the Regular Agenda for discussion and possible action upon the request of any Trustee.
 - CA-1. Water Supply and Production Report
 - CA-2. Central Coast Water Authority Update
8. **MANAGER REPORTS - STATUS, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**
 - A. **DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION**
 1. Financial Report on Administrative Matters
 - a) Presentation of Monthly Financial Statements – Revenues and Expenses
 - b) Approval of Accounts Payable
 2. Proposed Amendments to Legal Service Agreements – Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck; Best Best & Krieger LLP
 - B. **OPERATIONS**
 1. General Update
 2. Zone 2 Reservoir Electrical Service Project: Consideration and Possible Award

9. **REPORT, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**
 - A. **SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT**
 1. Eastern Management Area (EMA) Update
 2. Los Olivos Community Services District Update
10. **REPORTS BY THE BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF, QUESTIONS OF STAFF, STATUS REPORTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMITTEE REPORTS, AND OTHER MATTERS AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS NOT REQUIRING BOARD ACTION**
11. **CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FILING OF VARIOUS ITEMS**
12. **REQUESTS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING AGENDA:** Any member of the Board of Trustees may request to place an item on the Agenda for the next regular meeting. Any member of the public may submit a written request to the General Manager of the District to place an item on a future meeting Agenda, provided that the General Manager and the Board of Trustees retain sole discretion to determine which items to include on meeting Agendas.
13. **NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for **November 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.**
14. **CLOSED SESSION:**

The Board will hold a Closed Session to discuss the following items:

 - A. **CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - EXISTING LITIGATION**

[Subdivision (d)(1) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – 1 Case]

 1. Name of Case: Adjudicatory proceedings pending before the State Water Resources Control Board regarding Permit 15878 issued on Application 22423 to the City of Solvang, Petitions for Change, and Related Protests
 - B. **CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - POTENTIAL LITIGATION**

[Subdivision (d)(4) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – Potential Initiation of Litigation By the Agency – Two Matters]
15. **RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION:**

[Sections 54957.1 and 54957.7 of the Government Code]

 - A. Report (if any) on Closed Session Agenda Items 14.A – 14.B
16. **ADJOURNMENT**

This Notice and Agenda was posted at 3622 Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez, California, and notice was delivered in accordance with Government Code Section 54950 et seq., specifically Section 54956. This Notice and Agenda contains a brief general description of each item to be considered. The Board reserves the right to change the order in which items are heard. Copies of any staff reports or other written documentation relating to each item of business on the Agenda are on file with the District and available for public inspection during normal business hours at 3622 Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez. Such written materials will also be made available on the District's website, subject to staff's ability to post the documents before the regularly scheduled meeting. Questions concerning any of the Agenda items may be directed to the District's General Manager at (805) 688-6015. If a court challenge is brought against any of the Board's decisions related to the Agenda items above, the challenge may be limited to those issues raised by the challenger or someone else during the public meeting or in written correspondence to the District prior to or during the public meeting. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any individual needing special assistance to review Agenda materials or participate in this meeting may contact the District Secretary at (805) 688-6015. Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will best enable the District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

**SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1, was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, in-person at 1070 Faraday Street.

Trustees Present: Michael Burchardi
Jeff Clay
Brad Joos
Mark Moniot
Nick Urton

Trustees Absent: None

Others Present:	Paeter Garcia	Racel Cota	Jessica Diaz
	Dan Drugan	Kylie Kelleher	Jeff Dinkin
	Jared Speier		

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

President Clay called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., he stated that this was a Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Cota conducted roll call and reported that all Trustees were present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

President Clay led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTING OF THE NOTICE AND AGENDA:

Ms. Cota reported that the Agenda for this meeting was posted in accordance with the California Government Code commencing at Section 54953, as well as District Resolution No. 340.

4. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS, IF ANY, TO THE AGENDA:

There were no additions or corrections to the Agenda.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT:

President Clay welcomed any members of the public and offered time for members of the public to speak and address the Board on matters not on the Agenda. There was no public comment. Mr. Garcia reported that no written comments were submitted to the District for the meeting.

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF AUGUST 18, 2026

The Regular Meeting Minutes from August 18, 2026 were presented for consideration.

President Clay asked if there were any changes or additions to the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 18, 2026. There were no changes or additions requested.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the August 18, 2026 Regular meeting minutes as presented.

7. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

The Consent Agenda Report was provided in the Board Packet.

Mr. Garcia reviewed the Consent Agenda materials for the month of August. Various topics were discussed among the Board and staff.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Moniot, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

8. **MANAGER REPORTS - STATUS, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**

A. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

1. Financial Report on Administrative Matters

a) Presentation of Monthly Financial Statements – Revenues and Expenses

Ms. Cota announced that the Financial Statements were provided to the Board via email earlier in the day, included in the meeting handout materials, and posted on the District's website.

Ms. Cota reviewed the Statement of Revenues and Expenses for the month of August. She explained that the financials reflect the second month of activity for the new fiscal year. She highlighted various line-items related to revenue and expense transactions that occurred during the month and referred to the Fiscal-Year-to-Date Statement of Revenues and Expenses that provides a budget to actual snapshot for the year-to-date ending August 31, 2026. Ms. Cota stated that revenue exceeded expenses for the month of August by \$505,540.98 and the year-to-date net income was \$1,090,778.37.

b) Approval of Accounts Payable

Ms. Cota announced that the Warrant List was provided to the Board via email earlier in the day, included in the meeting handout materials, and posted on the District's website.

The Board reviewed the Warrant List which covered warrants 27445 through 27498 in the amount of \$553,424.10.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the Warrant List for August 19, 2026 through September 15, 2026.

B. OPERATIONS

1. General Update

Mr. Drugan reported that staff continue to monitor the water quality of supplies received from CCWA. As temperatures increased over the past month, staff maintained appropriate reservoir turnover to minimize water age and maintain water quality. He also reported that staff responded to a small leak on Madera Street, which required the installation of a new long-side water service connection and related paving work. Staff continue to focus on routine system maintenance activities, including fire hydrant maintenance, meter box inspections, and valve exercising. Staff also recently completed installation of a covered shelter for the backup generator at the Mesa Verde Pump Station. Mr. Drugan reported that the District is currently advertising the Zone 2 Reservoir electrical service project for public bids.

9. **REPORT, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**

A. SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT

1. Eastern Management Area (EMA) Update

The Board packet included the Notice and Agenda for the September 3, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EMA GSA). Mr. Garcia discussed various topics including the success of the three public workshops that were held in July and August 2026 in support of the EMA GSA's Groundwater Well Registration program.

10. **RESOLUTION NO. 862 – RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1 EXPRESSING GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION TO JEFFREY A. DINKIN FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE DISTRICT**

Mr. Garcia introduced Mr. Jeff Dinkin, retiring Employment Legal Counsel of the District, and announced that Mr. Jared Speier, who will be assisting the District once Mr. Dinkin retires, was also in attendance. Mr. Garcia noted that Mr. Dinkin has served as the District's Employment Legal Counsel for 34 years and will be sorely missed. President Clay read the full text of District Resolution No. 862 into the record, noting among many other accolades that Mr. Dinkin has played an instrumental role in defending and protecting the District's legal rights and interests, and that his sound decision-making, legal acumen, and commitment to public service have greatly benefited the District, its ratepayers and constituents, and the public at large. Following the reading of Resolution No. 862, members of the District's Board of Trustees expressed their sincere gratitude and appreciation for Mr. Dinkin's exemplary and long-standing service to the District and extended their best and heartfelt wishes to Mr. Dinkin for continued success, happiness, and fulfillment in his well-earned retirement.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Joos, to adopt Resolution No. 862, a Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement No.1 Expressing Gratitude and Appreciation to Jeffrey A. Dinkin for his Extraordinary Service and Dedication to the District, and the Resolution was approved by the following 5-0-0 roll call vote:

AYES, Trustees:	Brad Joos Mark Moniot Nick Urton Michael Burchardi Jeff Clay
NOES, Trustees:	None
ABSTAIN, Trustees:	None
ABSENT, Trustees:	None

11. **REPORTS BY THE BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF, QUESTIONS OF STAFF, STATUS REPORTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMITTEE REPORTS, AND OTHER MATTERS AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS NOT REQUIRING BOARD ACTION**

Trustee Moniot and Trustee Burchardi noted that they attended the Los Olivos Community Services District (LOCSD) Meeting on September 9, 2026 and reported that the LOCSD approved hiring an assessment engineer and the possibility of hosting additional workshops with the public.

12. CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FILING OF VARIOUS ITEMS

The Correspondence List was received by the Board.

13. REQUESTS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

There were no requests from the Board.

14. NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

President Clay stated that the next Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for October 20, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

15. CLOSED SESSION

The Board adjourned to closed session at 4:33 p.m.

A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - EXISTING LITIGATION

[Subdivision (d)(1) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – 1 Case]

1. Name of Case: Adjudicatory proceedings pending before the State Water Resources Control Board regarding Permit 15878 and Application 22423 of the City of Solvang, Petitions for Change, and Related Protests

B. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - POTENTIAL LITIGATION

[Subdivision (d)(4) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – Potential Initiation of Litigation by the Agency – Two Matters]

C. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: TITLE - GENERAL MANAGER

[Section 54957 of the Government Code]

D. CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR: Jeff Dinkin – Stradling, Yocca, Carlson & Rauth; Unrepresented Employee – General Manager [Section 54957.6 of the Government Code]

16. RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION:

[Sections 54957.1 and 54957.7 of the Government Code]

A. Report on Closed Session Agenda Items 15.A – 15.B.

The Board reconvened to open session at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Garcia announced that the Board met in closed session concerning Agenda Items 15.A through 15.B and that there was no reportable action.

B. Report on Closed Session Agenda Items 15.C and 15.D.

Consideration of General Manager Cost of Living Adjustment Increase and Compensation Adjustment. Mr. Jeff Dinkin, District Employment Counsel, reported that the Board met in closed session and completed the performance evaluation of the General Manager. He explained that the Board also discussed a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and compensation adjustment for the General Manager. Mr. Dinkin acting as the Board representative, reported the following actions from closed session:

The Board determined to approve a 3.9% cost-of-living adjustment increase effective July 1, 2026, which is the same COLA increase that all other District employees received pursuant to the Final Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2026/2027 that was approved by the Board in June 2026.

Consideration of General Manager Compensation Adjustment. The Board determined to grant the General Manager a 3.0% compensation merit increase effective the pay period beginning July 1, 2026.

Mr. Dinkin reported that Mr. Garcia will receive retroactive pay related to the approved cost-of-living adjustment and merit increases for the July 2026 and August 2026 pay periods.

It was **MOVED** by President Clay, seconded by Trustee Urton, to approve a 6.9% compensation adjustment consisting of a 3.9% cost-of-living adjustment and a 3.0% compensation merit adjustment for the General Manager's salary effective the pay period beginning July 1, 2026, including retroactive pay for the July 2026 and August 2026 pay periods, and the Motion passed by following the 5-0-0 roll call vote:

AYES, Trustees:	Brad Joos Mark Moniot Nick Urton Michael Burchardi Jeff Clay
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NOES, Trustees:	None
ABSTAIN, Trustees:	None
ABSENT, Trustees:	None

17. ADJOURNMENT:

Being no further business, it was **MOVED** by President Clay, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a 5-0-0 voice vote, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:32 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Racel Cota, Secretary to the Board

ATTEST:

Jeff Clay, President

MINUTES PREPARED BY:

Kylie Kelleher, Executive Administrative Assistant

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**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1
October 20, 2026**

Consent Agenda Report

CA-1. Water Supply and Production Report. The District's total water production in **September 2026 (376 AF)** was 75 AF lower than total production in **August 2026 (451 AF)**, 11 AF lower than the most recent 3-year running average (2023-2025) for the month of **September (387 AF)**, and 58 AF lower than the most recent 10-year running average (2016-2025) for the month of **September (434 AF)**. As noted in previous Consent Reports, the District's overall demands and production totals generally have been trending below historic levels for domestic, rural residential, and agricultural water deliveries due to water conservation, changing water use patterns, and private well installations.

For the month of **September 2026**, approximately **1 AF** was produced from the Santa Ynez Upland wells and approximately **1 AF** was produced from the 4.0 and 6.0 cfs well fields in the Santa Ynez River alluvium. As reflected in the Monthly Water Deliveries Report from CCWA, the District took delivery of **374 AF** of SWP supplies for the month, all of which was allocated to Exchange with the South Coast. According to USBR, **0 AF** of SWP supplies were delivered to Lake Cachuma for South Coast entities. Direct diversions to the County Park and USBR were **3.13 AF**.

The USBR Lake Cachuma Daily Operations Report for **September** (as of September 29, 2026) recorded the end of month reservoir elevation at **743.53'** and end of month storage of **164,913 AF**. USBR recorded total precipitation at the reservoir of **0.0 inches** for the month. Reported reservoir evaporation in **September** was **1,495.61 AF**. Based on the updated maximum storage capacity of 192,978 AF (previously 193,305 AF), as of **October 16, 2026** Cachuma reservoir was reported at **84.1%** of capacity, with then-current storage of **162,216 AF** (Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, Rainfall and Reservoir Summary).

When reservoir storage exceeds 100,000 AF, the Cachuma Member Units have usually received a full allocation. Conversely, a 20% pro-rata reduction from the full allocation is scheduled to occur in Water Years beginning at less than 100,000 AF, where incremental reductions may occur at other lower storage levels. In recent years, Reclamation approved a 100% Project allocation for federal WY 2023-2024 based on extraordinary rain conditions that spilled the reservoir in early 2023. The reservoir spilled again in early 2024 and Reclamation issued another 100% Project allocation for federal WY 2024-2025. Based on prevailing reservoir conditions, the Cachuma Member Units requested a 100% Project allocation for WY 2025-2026, which USBR approved. At the beginning of December 2025, ID No.1 held approximately 4,365 AF of contractual Project supplies in the reservoir, including approximately 1,878 AF of prior year carryover supplies and 2,487 AF from the current WY 2025-2026 allocation. Due to spill conditions that occurred again this year, all Cachuma Member Agencies lost their carryover supplies, such that the District currently holds approximately 581 AF of contractual Project supplies in Cachuma, comprised of this year's allocation less amounts exchanged thus far with the South Coast Member Units. **By joint letter dated June 5, 2026 the Cachuma Member Units requested a 100% Project allocation for WY 2026-2027. Reclamation granted that request by letter dated July 1, 2026, which resulted in an additional allocation of 2,651 AF to the District effective October 1st.**

Water releases for the protection of fish and aquatic habitat are made from Cachuma reservoir to the lower Santa Ynez River pursuant to the 2000 Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the 2019 Water Rights Order (WR 2019-0148) issued by the State Board (SWRCB). These releases are made to Hilton Creek and to the stilling basin portion of the outlet works at the base of Bradbury

Dam. The water releases required under the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion to avoid jeopardy to steelhead and adverse impacts to its critical habitat are summarized as follows:

NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion

- *When Reservoir Spills and the Spill Amount Exceeds 20,000 AF:*
 - 10 cfs at Hwy 154 Bridge during spill year(s) exceeding 20,000 AF
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge when spill amount exceeds 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge in the year immediately following a spill that exceeded 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
- *When Reservoir Does Not Spill or When Reservoir Spills Less Than 20,000 AF:*
 - 5 cfs at Hwy 154 when Reservoir does not spill and Reservoir storage is above 120,000 AF, or when Reservoir spill is less than 20,000 AF
 - 2.5 cfs at Hwy 154 in all years when Reservoir storage is below 120,000 AF but greater than 30,000 AF
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge if the Reservoir spilled in the preceding year and the spill amount exceeded 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
 - 30 AF per month to “refresh the stilling basin and long pool” when Reservoir storage is less than 30,000 AF

The water releases required under the SWRCB Water Rights Order 2019-0148 for the protection of fish and other public trust resources in the lower Santa Ynez River and to prevent the waste and unreasonable use of water are summarized as follows:

SWRCB Order WR 2019-0148

- *During Below Normal, Dry, and Critical Dry water years (October 1 – September 30), releases shall be made in accordance with the requirements of the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion as set forth above (“Table 1 Flows”).*
- *During Above Normal and Wet water years, the following minimum flow requirements must be maintained at Hwy 154 and Alisal Bridges (“Table 2 Flows”):*
 - 48 cfs from February 15 to April 14 for spawning
 - 20 cfs from February 15 to June 1 for incubation and rearing
 - 25 cfs from June 2 to June 9 for emigration, with ramping to 10 cfs by June 30
 - 10 cfs from June 30 to October 1 for rearing and maintenance of resident fish
 - 5 cfs from October 1 to February 15 for resident fish
- *For purposes of SWRCB Order WR 2019-0148, water year classifications are as follows:*
 - Wet is when Cachuma Reservoir inflow is greater than 117,842 AF;
 - Above Normal is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 117,842 AF or greater than 33,707 AF;
 - Below Normal is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 33,707 AF or greater than 15,366 AF;
 - Dry is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 15,366 AF or greater than 4,550 AF
 - Critical Dry is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 4,550 AF

Based on local rainfall conditions thus far in the new water year, inflows to Cachuma Reservoir have exceeded 33,707 AF and thus have triggered higher fishery release requirements from Bradbury Dam under “Table 2” of State Board Order 2019-0148 (see flow regime above).

CA-2. State Water Project (SWP) and Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) Updates.

As previously reported, in 2023 DWR declared a 100 percent SWP Table A allocation for the first time since 2006 (compared to a 5 percent allocation in 2022). In 2024, despite above normal precipitation and snowpack, and above-average storage levels in Lake Oroville, DWR took a conservative approach and limited the final Table A allocation to 40 percent. In 2025, DWR again took a very conservative approach to the Table A allocation, as follows:

- December 2, 2024 – DWR issued an initial 2025 SWP Table A allocation of 5 percent (5%)
- December 23, 2024 – Allocation increased to 15 percent (15%)
- January 28, 2025 – Allocation increased to 20 percent (20%)
- February 25, 2025 – Allocation increased to 35 percent (35%)
- March 25, 2025 – Allocation increased to 40 percent (40%)
- April 29, 2025 – Final Allocation increased to 50 percent (50%)

For the 2026 Water Year, on December 1, 2025 DWR issued a Notice to the State Water Contractors establishing an initial 10 percent (10%) SWP Table A allocation. By Notice dated January 29, 2026 DWR increased the Table A allocation to thirty percent (30%). DWR’s January Notice explained the updated allocation as follows:

A series of atmospheric rivers that arrived mid-December and continued until early January provided for above average precipitation and high runoff, contributing to storage increases in California reservoirs. However, the series of storms were warm, snowpack accumulation has been below average, and continuing warm and dry weather in January has resulted in snowpack loss. ... Considering the recent dry and warm conditions and associated forecasts, we will be carefully assessing and evaluating future allocation increases as hydrologic conditions become clearer. ... To determine the available SWP water supplies, DWR considers various factors including SWP contractors’ 2026 carryover supplies and demands, existing storage in SWP conservation facilities, estimates of future runoff, near-term and seasonal climate forecasts, SWP operational, contractual, and regulatory requirements set forth in the Federal Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act, and water rights obligations under the State Water Resources Control Board’s authority.

On May 15, 2026 DWR increased the final 2026 SWP Table A allocation to 45 percent. As of October 15, 2026 DWR recorded Lake Oroville storage levels at 45 percent of total capacity and 82 percent of its historic average for this time of year.

As reflected in the October 8th and October 21, 2026 meeting agendas for the CCWA Operating Committee, and the October 22, 2026 meeting agenda for the CCWA Board of Directors, CCWA remains focused on various important issues related to the SWP and SWP deliveries, including but not limited to: SWP operations and water supply conditions; pending and proposed water transfers; the proposed permanent sale of SWP Table A supplies by the Montecito Water District; land subsidence and invasive mussel issues affecting the California Aqueduct; infrastructure maintenance and improvements; and strategic planning. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CCWA Board of Directors is scheduled for October 22, 2026.



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Bradbury Dam Field Office
Lake Cachuma Daily Operations
Run Date: September 29, 2026

September 2026

Day ¹ SHEF Tag→	Lake Cachuma				Rainfall		Evaporation ³		CCWA Inflow	Release						Computed Inflow ⁵
	Elevation	Storage ²	Change In Storage	Surface Area						Park Use	Tunnel	Hilton Creek	WR 89-18	Outlet ⁴	Spillway	
	HL	LS	LC		PP	PPAF	EV	EVAF	QICWA		QUVEC	QUHIL	QUWATR	QU	QS	QI
	ft	acre-feet	acre-feet	acres	inches	acre-feet	inches	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet	acre-feet
31	745.31	169,951														
1	745.24	169,751	(200.8)	2,860.1	-	-	0.250	45.29	-	0.10	96.49	13.64	-	39.00	-	(6.32)
2	745.18	169,578	(172.1)	2,858.1	-	-	0.380	68.78	-	0.11	96.49	13.57	-	39.00	-	45.81
3	745.10	169,349	(229.5)	2,855.3	-	-	0.300	54.25	-	0.10	102.77	13.57	-	39.00	-	(19.83)
4	745.04	169,177	(172.1)	2,853.3	-	-	0.280	50.60	-	0.11	89.20	13.56	-	38.00	-	19.33
5	744.97	168,977	(199.8)	2,850.8	-	-	0.320	57.78	-	0.10	87.86	13.56	-	40.00	-	(0.48)
6	744.92	168,835	(141.7)	2,849.0	-	-	0.320	57.74	-	0.11	73.53	13.53	-	38.00	-	41.22
7	744.88	168,722	(113.4)	2,847.6	-	-	0.270	48.69	-	0.10	62.55	13.54	-	40.00	-	51.53
8	744.84	168,609	(113.4)	2,846.1	-	-	0.350	63.09	-	0.11	53.25	13.49	-	38.00	-	54.59
9	744.78	168,439	(170.0)	2,843.9	-	-	0.230	41.43	-	0.10	76.21	13.51	-	39.00	-	0.22
10	744.74	168,325	(113.4)	2,842.5	-	-	0.410	73.81	-	0.11	86.04	13.48	-	39.00	-	99.09
11	744.66	168,099	(226.7)	2,839.6	-	-	0.490	88.12	-	0.10	95.91	13.48	-	39.00	-	9.91
12	744.58	167,872	(226.7)	2,836.7	-	-	0.320	57.49	-	0.11	93.28	13.50	-	39.00	-	(23.33)
13	744.52	167,702	(170.0)	2,834.5	-	-	0.380	68.22	-	0.10	97.49	13.44	-	38.00	-	47.22
14	744.44	167,475	(226.7)	2,831.6	-	-	0.310	55.59	-	0.11	92.80	13.45	-	39.00	-	(25.75)
15	744.38	167,305	(170.0)	2,829.5	-	-	0.290	51.97	-	0.10	105.26	13.43	-	39.00	-	39.73
16	744.30	167,078	(226.7)	2,826.6	-	-	0.250	44.75	-	0.10	98.02	13.44	-	39.00	-	(31.39)
17	744.24	166,908	(170.0)	2,824.4	-	-	0.250	44.72	-	0.11	96.82	13.42	-	36.00	-	21.04
18	744.18	166,738	(170.0)	2,822.2	-	-	0.260	46.47	-	0.10	92.85	13.40	-	37.00	-	19.79
19	744.11	166,540	(198.4)	2,819.7	-	-	0.280	46.43	-	0.11	85.70	13.43	-	37.00	-	(15.69)
20	744.05	166,370	(170.0)	2,817.5	-	-	0.250	44.61	-	0.10	85.61	13.38	-	36.00	-	9.67
21	743.99	166,200	(169.7)	2,815.4	-	-	0.150	26.75	-	0.11	88.63	13.38	-	37.00	-	(3.80)
22	743.94	166,060	(139.9)	2,813.6	-	-	0.190	33.86	-	0.10	81.20	13.38	-	36.00	-	24.66
23	743.88	165,893	(167.9)	2,811.4	-	-	0.230	40.95	-	0.11	84.55	13.37	-	37.00	-	8.13
24	743.84	165,781	(111.9)	2,809.9	-	-	0.360	64.07	-	0.10	87.24	13.36	-	34.00	-	86.86
25	743.77	165,585	(195.8)	2,807.4	-	-	0.260	46.23	-	0.11	82.01	13.35	-	35.00	-	(19.13)
26	743.71	165,417	(167.9)	2,805.2	-	-	0.310	55.08	-	0.10	91.89	13.36	-	35.00	-	27.57
27	743.65	165,249	(167.9)	2,803.0	-	-	0.220	39.06	-	0.11	82.69	13.32	-	34.00	-	1.32
28	743.59	165,081	(167.9)	2,800.8	-	-	0.210	37.25	-	0.10	89.44	13.33	-	34.00	-	6.27
29	743.53	164,913	(167.9)	2,798.7	-	-	0.240	42.54	-	0.11	89.64	13.30	-	35.00	-	12.73
Total			(5,038.08)		-	-	8.340	1,495.61	-	3.14	2,545.42	389.97	-	1,085.00	-	480.96
Minimum	743.53	164,913	(229.52)	2,798.66	-	-	0.150	26.75	-	0.10	53.25	13.30	-	34.00	-	(31.39)
Average	744.38	167,311	(173.73)	2,829.47	-	-	0.288	51.57	-	0.10	87.77	13.45	-	37.41	-	16.58
Maximum	745.24	169,751	(111.90)	2,860.13	-	-	0.490	88.12	-	0.11	105.26	13.64	-	40.00	-	99.09

Comments

1. Data based on 24-hour period ending 0800
2. Storage volume based on 2021 bathymetric survey.
3. Evaporation in inches is the measured pan evaporation. Calculated evaporation in acre feet uses the September pan factor 76%
4. Indicated outlet release includes any leakage around gates.
5. Computed inflow is the sum of change in storage, releases, and evaporation minus precip on the reservoir surface and CCWA inflow.



Santa Barbara County - Flood Control District

130 East Victoria Street, Santa Barbara CA 93101 - 805.568.3440 - www.countyofsb.org/pwd

Rainfall and Reservoir Summary

Updated 8am: 10/16/2026

Water Year: 2027

Storm Number: NA

Notes: Daily rainfall amounts are recorded as of 8am for the previous 24 hours. Rainfall units are expressed in inches. All data on this page are from automated sensors, are preliminary, and subject to verification. *Each

Water Year (WY) runs from Sept 1 through Aug 31 and is designated by the calendar year in which it ends

County Real-Time Rainfall and Reservoir Website link: ➤ <https://rain.cosbpw.net>

Rainfall	ID	24 hrs	Storm 0day(s)	Month	Year*	% to Date	% of Year*	AI
Buellton (Fire Stn)	233	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Cachuma Dam (USBR)	332	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	2%	0%	
Carpinteria (Fire Stn)	208	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	4%	0%	
Cuyama (Fire Stn)	436	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	8%	0%	
Figueroa Mtn. (USFS Stn)	421	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03	5%	0%	11.9
Gibraltar Dam (City Facility)	230	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.03	7%	0%	11.9
Goleta (Fire Stn-Los Carneros)	440	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Lompoc (City Hall)	439	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	2%	0%	12.0
Los Alamos (Fire Stn)	204	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	3%	0%	
San Marcos Pass (USFS Stn)	212	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.04	5%	0%	
Santa Barbara (County Bldg)	234	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	4%	0%	
Santa Maria (City Pub. Works)	380	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	2%	0%	
Santa Ynez (Fire Stn /Airport)	218	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Sisquoc (Fire Stn)	256	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16	34%	1%	

Countywide percentage of "Normal-to-Date" rainfall : 6%

Countywide percentage of "Normal Water-Year" rainfall : 0%

Countywide percentage of "Normal Water-Year" rainfall calculated assuming no more rain through Aug. 31, 2026 (End of WY2026).

AI (Antecedent Index / Soil Wetness)

6.0 and below = Wet (min. = 2.5)
6.1 - 9.0 = Moderate
9.1 and above = Dry (max. = 12.5)

Reservoirs

Reservoir Elevations referenced to NGVD-29.

**Cachuma is full and subject to spilling at elevation 750 ft.

However, the lake is surcharged to 753 ft. for fish release water.

(Cachuma water storage based on Dec 2021 capacity revision)

Click on Site for Real-Time Readings	Spillway Elev. (ft)	Current Elev. (ft)	Max. Storage (ac-ft)	Current Storage (ac-ft)	Current Capacity (%)	Storage Change Mo.(ac-ft)	Storage Change Year*(ac-ft)
Gibraltar Reservoir	1,400.00	1,382.27	4,490	1,164	25.9%	-50	-120
Cachuma Reservoir	753.**	742.56	192,978	162,216	84.1%	-2,390	-7,736
Jameson Reservoir	2,224.00	2,218.10	4,587	3,936	85.8%	-102	-274
Twitchell Reservoir	Twitchell Reservoir level has dropped below the sensor, data no longer available.						

[Previous Rainfall and Reservoir Summaries](#)

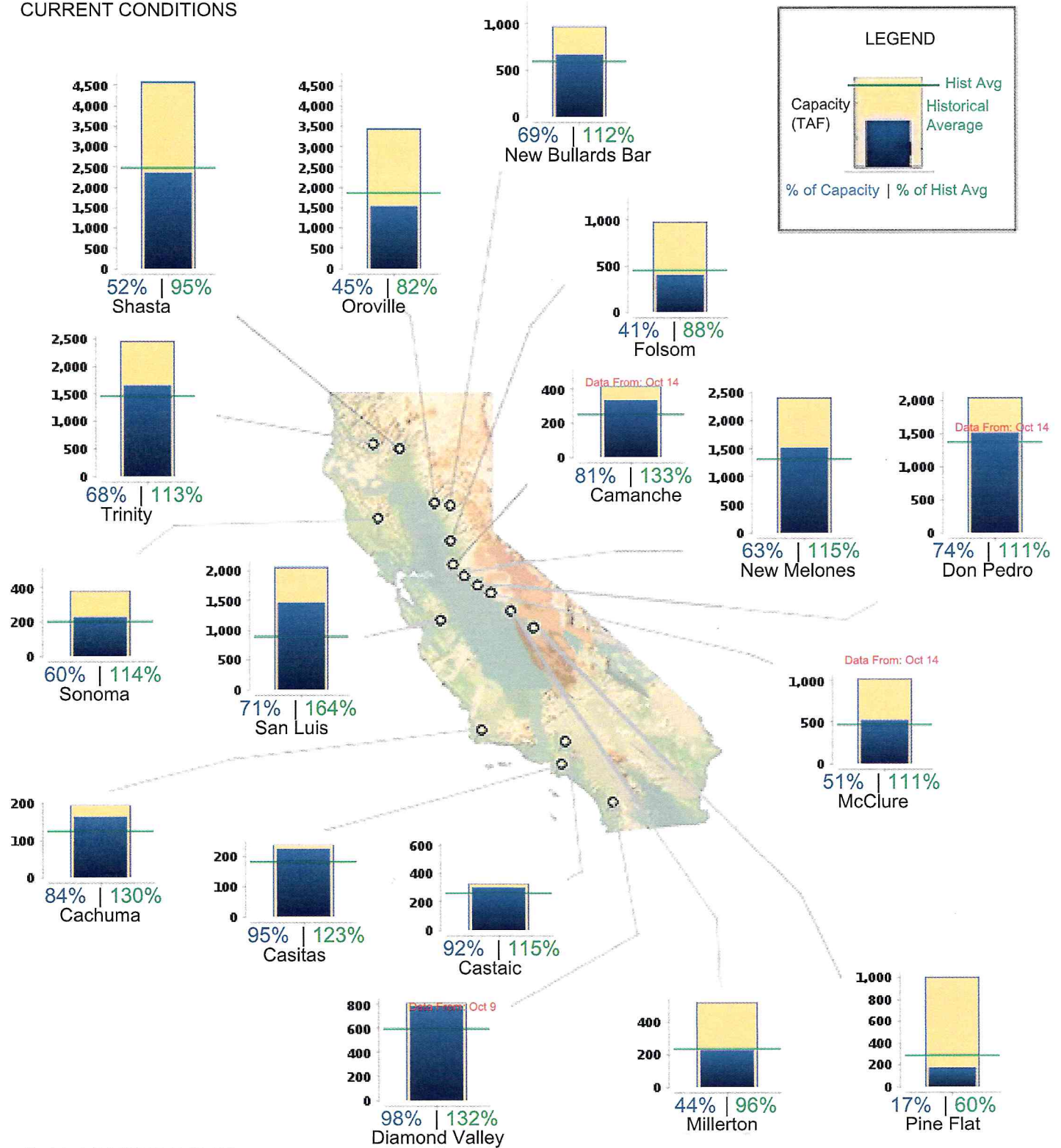


CURRENT RESERVOIR CONDITIONS

CALIFORNIA MAJOR WATER SUPPLY RESERVOIRS

Midnight - October 15, 2026

CURRENT CONDITIONS



Updated 10/16/2026 11:18 AM



CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dessi Mladenova, Controller
FROM: Lacey Adam, Senior Accountant
SUBJECT: Monthly Water Deliveries

October 6, 2026

According to the CCWA revenue meters at each turnout, the following deliveries were made during the month of September 2026:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Chorro	131
Lopez.....	273
Shandon.....	0
Guadalupe.....	29
Santa Maria.....	839
Golden State Water Co.....	0
Vandenberg.....	311
Buellton	30
Solvang	88
Santa Ynez ID#1	374
Bradbury.....	0
TOTAL	2,075

In order to reconcile these deliveries with the DWR revenue meter, which read 2,099 acre-feet, the following delivery amounts should be used for billing purposes:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Chorro	133
Lopez	276
Shandon.....	0
Guadalupe.....	29
Santa Maria	785*
Golden State Water Co	64*
Vandenberg	315
Buellton	30
Solvang	89
Santa Ynez ID#1	378
Bradbury	0
TOTAL	2,099

*Golden State Water Company delivered 64 acre-feet into its system through the Santa Maria turnout. This delivery is recorded by providing a credit of 64 acre-feet to the City of Santa Maria and a charge in the same amount to the Golden State Water Company.

Notes: Santa Ynez ID#1 water usage is divided into 0 acre-feet of Table A water and 378 acre-feet of exchange water.

The exchange water is allocated as follows

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Exchange Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Goleta	136
Santa Barbara	91
Montecito	91
Carpinteria	<u>60</u>
TOTAL	378

Bradbury Deliveries into Lake Cachuma are allocated as follows:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Carpinteria	0
Goleta	0
La Cumbre	0
Montecito	0
Morehart	0
Santa Barbara	0
Raytheon	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	0

cc: Daniel Brooks, Goleta WD
Mike Babb, Golden State WC
Joshua Haggmark, City of Santa Barbara
Janet Gingras, COMB
Jeromy Caldera, San Luis Obispo County
Paeter Garcia, Santa Ynez RWCD ID#1
Shad Springer, City of Santa Maria
David Trujillo, City of Guadalupe
Kelley Dyer, Carpinteria Valley WD
Mike Alvarado, La Cumbre Mutual WC
Pernell Rush, Vandenberg SFB
Nick Turner, Montecito WD
Jose Acosta, City of Solvang
Rose Hess, City of Buellton



**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OPERATING COMMITTEE
of the
CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY**

AGENDA

**Chairman – Paeter Garcia
Vice Chairman – Shad Springer**

Thursday, October 8, 2026
9:00 AM
at 255 Industrial Way, Buellton, California 93427

Members of the public may participate by video call or telephone via
Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 258 675 854 391 826 Passcode: tA7SK2q3

or by dialing +1 323-484-5095, and entering access Code/Meeting ID; 723 814 189#

Please note: public participation by video call or telephone is for convenience only and is not required by law. If technical interruptions to the video call/telephone occur, the chair has the discretion to continue the meeting and participants are invited to take advantage of the other participation options above.

Public Comment on agenda items may occur via video call or telephonically, or by submission to the Board Secretary via email at lfw@ccwa.com no later than 8:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. In your email, please specify (1) the meeting date and agenda item (number and title) on which you are providing a comment and (2) that you would like your comment read into the record during the meeting. If you would like your comment read into the record during the meeting (as either general public comment or on a specific agenda item), please limit your comments to no more than 250 words.

Every effort will be made to read comments into the record, but some comments may not be read due to time limitations. Please also note that if you submit a written comment and do not specify that you would like this comment read into the record during the meeting, your comment will be forwarded to Committee members for their consideration.

Pursuant to Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt public records that relate to open session agenda items and are distributed to a majority of the Committee less than seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting will be available on the CCWA internet web site, accessible at <https://www.ccwa.com>.

★ indicates written report

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call**
- II. Public Comment – (Any member of the public may address the Committee relating to any matter within the Committee's jurisdiction. Individual Speakers may be limited to five minutes; all speakers to a total of fifteen minutes.)**
- III. Strategic Plan Needs Assessment Workshop**
Staff Recommendation: For discussion.
- IV. Reports from Committee Members for Information Only**
- V. Items for Next Regular Meeting Agenda**
- VI. Date of Next Meeting: October 21, 2026**
- VII. Adjournment**

Agenda

CCWA Operating Committee Meeting – Strategic Plan Needs Assessment

Thursday, October 8, 2026 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Meeting Goals

- Propose success criteria for Strategic Plan, for the Board to confirm
- Propose strategic priorities to include in Strategic Plan
- Identify strategic options to discuss with CCWA Board

Discussion Topics

1. Introduction and meeting goals
2. Present and discuss results from questionnaires and check for any perspectives not represented
3. Discuss and refine proposed success criteria for Strategic Plan
4. Break
5. Discuss primary ways CCWA will provide value through the planning horizon
6. Identify the strategic options the Operating Committee would like to discuss with the Board during November 9 workshop
7. Confirm what we heard, and next steps
 - a. Optional conversation with Ken Kirby (Evotoco) between October 13 and 21
 - b. Strategic Direction Workshop with the CCWA Board on November 9



**A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OPERATING COMMITTEE
of the
CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY**

AGENDA

**Chairman – Paeter Garcia
Vice Chairman – Shad Springer**

Wednesday, October 21, 2026
9:00 AM
at 255 Industrial Way, Buellton, California
and

Brownstein, Hyatt Farber Schreck, 1020 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA

Members of the public may participate by video call or telephone via
Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 282 264 638 274 470 Passcode: uW2DW7ht
or by dialing +1 323-484-5095 and entering access Code/Meeting ID; 155 985 808#

Please note: public participation by video call or telephone is for convenience only and is not required by law. If technical interruptions to the video call/telephone occur, the chair has the discretion to continue the meeting and participants are invited to take advantage of the other participation options above.

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★ indicates written report

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

II. Public Comment – (Any member of the public may address the Committee relating to any matter within the Committee's jurisdiction. Individual Speakers may be limited to five minutes; all speakers to a total of fifteen minutes.)

III. Consent Calendar

- A. Minutes of the July 9, 2026 Operating Committee Meeting ★
- B. Minutes of the October 8, 2026 Operating Committee Meeting ★
Staff recommendation: Approve consent calendar.

IV. Executive Director's Report

- A. California Aqueduct Subsidence and Golden Mussel Mitigation Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- B. Presentation from Montecito Water District Regarding Potential Permanent Sale of a Portion of the District's State Water Project Allocation
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- C. Review and Discussion of CCWA Participant Water Management Needs Survey Results.
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

- D. Operations Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- E. Water Supply Situation Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- F. Water Transfer Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- G. Polonio Pass Water Treatment Plant Filter Media and Underdrain Nozzle Replacement Project
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- H. Chorro Valley Access Road Repair Project Reimbursement Agreement ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- I. State Water Contractors Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

V. Reports from Committee Members for Information Only

VI. Items for Next Regular Meeting Agenda

VII. Date of Next Regular Meeting: January 14, 2027

VIII. Adjournment



**CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING**

AGENDA

**Chairman – Eric Friedman
Vice Chairman – Jeff Clay**

Thursday, October 22, 2026
9:00 AM
at 255 Industrial Way, Buellton, California 93427

Members of the public may participate by video call or telephone via
Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 284 583 838 661 716 Passcode: mf7WS7zW
or by dialing +1 323-484-5095, and entering access Code/Meeting ID: 332 367 850#

Please note: public participation by video call or telephone is for convenience only and is not required by law. If technical interruptions to the video call/telephone occur, the chair has the discretion to continue the meeting and participants are invited to take advantage of the other participation options above.

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Pursuant to Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt public records that relate to open session agenda items and are distributed to a majority of the Board less than seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting will be available on the CCWA internet web site, accessible at <https://www.ccwa.com>.

★ indicates written report

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call**
- II. Public Comment – (Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any matter within the Board's jurisdiction. Individual Speakers may be limited to five minutes; all speakers to a total of fifteen minutes.)**
- III. Consent Calendar**
 - A. Minutes of the August 27, 2026 Regular Meeting ★
 - B. Bills for Ratification ★
 - C. Status Report on Fiscal Year 2026-27 Procurements ★
 - D. Controller's Report ★
 - E. Operations Report ★
 - F. California Environmental Quality Act Findings on the Riser Replacement Project – Phase 2 and Electrical Vehicle Charging Station Installation Project ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Consent Calendar
- IV. Executive Directors Report**
 - A. Water Supply Situation Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
 - B. Water Transfers Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

- C. Presentation from Montecito Water District Regarding Potential Permanent Sale of a Portion of the District's State Water Project Allocation
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- D. Approving a Reimbursement Agreement for the Chorro Valley Access Road Repair Project ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve and adopt Resolution No. 26-13 entitled "Approving a Reimbursement Agreement for the Chorro Valley Access Road Repair Project"
- E. Clerical Changes to CCWA Personnel Policy Manual ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve proposed clerical changes to CCWA Personnel Policy Manual.
- F. FY 2026/27 First Quarter Investment Report ★
Staff Recommendation: Accept Report
- G. Ernst and Young Audit Report on the 2026 DWR Statement of Charges ★
Staff Recommendation: Accept Report
- H. State Water Contractors Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- I. Legislative Report ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- J. Executive Director's General Update
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

V. Reports from Board Members for Information Only

VI. Items for Next Regular Meeting Agenda

VII. Date of Next Meeting: Special Board of Directors November 9, 2026

VIII. Closed Session

- A. CLOSED SESSION: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION
Government Code section 54956.9(d)(4)
Initiation of litigation: 1 case
- B. CLOSED SESSION: PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
Government Code section 54957
Title: Safety Officer
- C. CLOSED SESSION: CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS
Government Code section 54956.8
Property: CCWA Project Allocation

IX. Return to Open Session

- A. Report on Closed Session Actions (if any)

X. Adjournment



To: Board of Trustees
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1

From: Paeter Garcia, General Manager
Dan Drugan, Water Resources Manager

Date: October 20, 2026

Subject: Recommendation for Bid Award for Zone 2 Reservoir Electrical Service

Agenda: Item 8.B.2

STAFF REPORT

As part of the District's Fiscal Year 2026/2027 budget process, staff recommended, and the Board of Trustees approved, a capital improvement project (CIP) to install a new electrical service at the Zone 2 Reservoir site. The site currently lacks utility power, and thus the existing facilities – including one reservoir mixer and telemetry equipment – rely on solar power. Installing a new electrical service for the Zone 2 Reservoir site will enable the District to utilize higher-power mixing devices and enhance the functionality of communication, security, and maintenance activities for this property.

The project includes installation of a new pad-mounted meter pedestal, approximately 650 linear feet of electrical conduit, a second conduit for redundancy, and associated electrical infrastructure to provide utility power to the reservoir mixing equipment and other site facilities.

District staff prepared a Request for Bids (RFB) for the Zone 2 Reservoir Electrical Service project. The RFB was released on September 28, 2026, and bids were due by October 15, 2026. The District received four bids, all of which were determined to be responsive to the RFB. A summary of the RFB responses is as follows:

Description/Contractor	Taft Electric Company	Electricraft	SMITH MEP	DL Electric
Total Bid	\$91,839	\$66,222	\$66,125	\$43,405

Following evaluation of the bids, staff has determined that DL Electric is the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. DL Electric is based in Buellton and has experience working with District staff on a variety of electrical projects.

The District's approved FY 2026/2027 budget includes \$150,000 for this project, and the lowest bid of \$43,405 falls far below the budgeted amount. In addition to the electrical work, the District plans to procure a second Gridbee mixer for installation at the Zone 2 Reservoir site, with the mixer's cost also funded from this project budget.

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize award of the District's Zone 2 Reservoir Electrical Service (Project) to DL Electric and authorize the General Manager to execute a Contract with DL Electric in the amount of \$43,405 to complete the Project.

MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)
FOR THE **EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA**
IN THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN

MEETING WILL BE HELD **VIRTUALLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**
AT 2:00 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 03, 2026

Remote public participation is available via Telephone or TEAMS

To access the meeting via telephone, please dial: [+1 469-998-7311, 418942414#](tel:+14699987311) or via the Web at: [Join the meeting now](#)

“Join a Meeting” - **Meeting ID: 263 990 233 166 67 Meeting Passcode: Pq7Kj6Bj**

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Volunteer Selection for Upcoming Board Meeting Report-Out
3. Public Comment (Any member of the public may address the CAG relating to any non-agenda matter within the CAG’s jurisdiction. The time for public comment allotted for each individual shall not exceed three minutes.)
4. CAG Membership Review
5. Well Registration and Metering Program
 - a. Well Registration Update
 - b. De minimis extractor proposed updated definition and policies
 - c. Correspondence with EMA meter suppliers
6. Public Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan Periodic Evaluation
7. EMA GSA Initiatives Update
 - a. FY 2026/27 Groundwater Extraction Fee Administration
8. Proposition 68 Grant Initiatives Update
 - a. Component 5 - Well Point Installation Project Drilling Bid
9. Grant/Financing Opportunities
 - a. IRWM Quarterly Grant Opportunities Newsletter
10. Future CAG Meeting Date/Time
 - a. Thursday, October 15, 2026 3:00 PM
11. CAG Reports and Requests for Future Agenda Items
12. Future EMA GSA Board Meeting
 - a. Thursday, September 24, 2026 4:00 PM

13. Adjournment

[This agenda was posted prior to the meeting at ema-SantaYnezWater.org. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency at (805) 457-5065. Advanced notification as far as practicable prior to the meeting will enable the GSA to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.]

NOTICE AND AGENDA OF REGULAR MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

HELD AT
SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT, MEETING ROOM
1070 FARADAY STREET, SANTA YNEZ, CALIFORNIA
4:00 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

Optional remote public participation is available via Telephone or TEAMS

To access the meeting via telephone, please dial: +1 469-998-7311, 209762335# or via the Web at: Join the meeting now

“Join a Meeting” - Meeting ID 294 811 517 405 Meeting Passcode: 4nNRT3

***** Please Note *****

The above teleconference option for public participation is being offered as a convenience only and may limit or otherwise prevent your access to and participation in the meeting due to disruption or unavailability of the teleconference line. If any such disruption or unavailability occurs for any reason the meeting will not be suspended, terminated, or continued. Therefore in-person attendance of the meeting is strongly encouraged.

AGENDA OF REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Public Comment (Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any non-agenda matter within the Board’s jurisdiction. The time for public comment allotted for each individual shall not exceed three minutes. No action will be taken by the Board at this meeting on any public comment item.)
3. Consent Agenda
 - a. Review and consider approval of meeting minutes for the previous Board Meeting.
 - b. Review and consider approval of Financial Statements and Warrant List.
4. Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting Report-Out
5. Action Items
 - a. Review and consider approval of GSP Periodic Evaluation and amendment to GSP to address Recommended Corrective Actions (RCAs) #5 and #6.
 - b. Review and consider approval of Public Works Contract with low-bid Drilling Contractor for Prop 68 Grant Component 5 Monitoring Program Improvements.
 - c. Review and consider approval of Amendment No. 2 to the Agreement with MLJ Environmental for On-Call Watermark Support Services.
 - d. Review and consider for approval adoption of a 1-year audit cycle for the duration of the Proposition 68 Grant and consider for approval the Engagement Letter for GSA Audit for Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2026.
 - e. Review status of well registration and provide direction on potential extension of well registration deadline and potential penalties for not registering wells.

- f. Review and provide direction on de minimis extractor determinations for metering requirements and policies and procedures for shared wells.
- 6. Informational Items
 - a. Prop 68 Grant and EMA GSA Initiatives Update
- 7. Consider Date/Time and Need for Future Meetings of the EMA GSA.
 - a. Next EMA GSA CAG Meeting Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM.
 - b. Next EMA GSA Special Board Meeting Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 4:00 PM at SYCSD Meeting Room.
 - c. Next Basin-Wide Joint Special Meeting Friday, December 11, 2026, at 9:00 AM at Buellton City Council Chambers.
- 8. Board of Directors Reports and Requests for Future Agenda Items
- 9. Adjournment

[This agenda was posted at least 72 hours prior to the regular meeting at 3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101, Santa Ynez, California, and ema-SantaYnezWater.org in accordance with Government Code Section 54954. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency at (805) 457-5065. Advanced notification as far as practicable prior to the meeting will enable the GSA to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.]

NOTICE AND AGENDA OF SPECIAL MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

HELD AT
SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT, MEETING ROOM
1070 FARADAY STREET, SANTA YNEZ, CALIFORNIA
4:00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2026

Optional remote public participation is available via Telephone or TEAMS

To access the meeting via telephone, please dial: [+1 323-618-1948](tel:+13236181948), [225796028#](tel:+13236181948) or via the Web at: [Join the meeting now](#)

“Join a Meeting” - Meeting ID 214 676 774 791 557 Meeting Passcode: Rd3RH67u

*** Please Note ***

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AGENDA OF SPECIAL MEETING

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Public Comment (Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any non-agenda matter within the Board’s jurisdiction. The total time for all public comment shall not exceed fifteen minutes and the time allotted for each individual shall not exceed five minutes. No action will be taken by the Board at this meeting on any public comment item.)
3. Agricultural Director and Alternate Director Selection Process
 - a. Review and consider approval of requesting nominations for an Agricultural Director and an Alternate Agricultural Director for the EMA GSA Board of Directors
4. Consider Date/Time for Next Regular and/or Special Meetings of the EMA GSA
 - a. Next EMA GSA CAG Meeting Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM.
 - b. Next EMA GSA Board Meeting Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 4:00 PM at SYCSD Meeting Room.
 - c. Next Basin-Wide Joint Special Meeting Friday, December 11, 2026, at 9:00 AM at Buellton City Council Chambers.
5. Board of Directors Reports and Requests for Future Agenda Items
6. Adjournment

[This agenda was posted at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting at 3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101, Santa Ynez, California, and SantaYnezWater.org in accordance with Government Code Section 54954. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency at (805) 457-5065. Advanced notification as far as practicable prior to the meeting will enable the GSA to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.]

TO: SYRVGB EMA GSA Board of Directors

FROM: Dan HeimeI, Executive Director

DATE: October 7, 2026

SUBJECT: Item 3a – Review and consider approval of requesting nominations for an Agricultural Director and an Alternate Agricultural Director for the EMA GSA Board of Directors.

Background

On October 24, 2024, the Member Directors of the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EMA GSA) unanimously appointed Douglas Circle as Agricultural Director and Mary Heyden as Alternate Agricultural Director, following their nomination by the Santa Ynez Water Group (Water Group). Article 7.4 of the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JPA) sets a two-year term for these positions, so both terms expire on or about October 24, 2026. The Agricultural Director and Alternate may be reappointed for additional terms, but reappointment requires re-nomination by the Water Group and a unanimous vote of the Member Directors.

Discussion

Article 7.2(f) of the JPA (Attachment A) sets out the process for appointing the Agricultural Director and Alternate Agricultural Director. The process has four steps:

1. **Board request.** The process begins upon request of the Board. The Water Group then solicits applications, working with other agricultural associations or entities in the EMA, including the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau.
2. **Public solicitation.** The solicitation must be publicly noticed in a newspaper of general circulation within the EMA and announced at no less than one public meeting of the EMA GSA.
3. **Nomination.** The Water Group reviews the applications and nominates one or more Qualified Nominees. The Water Group must present a discussion of its review and nomination process at an open public meeting of the EMA GSA.
4. **Appointment.** Appointment requires a unanimous vote of the Member Directors (or Alternates) at a publicly noticed meeting where a Director or Alternate from each Member is present and votes.

A Qualified Nominee does not need to be a member of the Water Group, but must: (i) own, or represent an owner of, property within the GSA boundaries that is involved in Commercial Agriculture and produces at least 2 acre-feet per year of groundwater from within the GSA to support that agriculture; (ii) be a resident and registered voter within the GSA boundaries; and (iii) not be a party, or represent an owner who is a party, to pending litigation against the GSA, other than a groundwater rights adjudication affecting the EMA.

In 2024, the Water Group published its solicitation in the Santa Ynez Valley News and the Santa Maria Times from September 4 through September 30, 2024, and submitted its recommendation to the Board on October 14, 2024. Because of the required public noticing, the process is unlikely to be completed

before the current terms expire. If the Board makes its request at this meeting, Staff anticipates that the Water Group could present its nominations, and the Member Directors could consider appointment, at the next EMA GSA Board Meeting on November 19, 2026.

If the Agricultural Director seat is vacant, items that require a supermajority under Article 11.3(b) of the JPA, such as budgets, fees, GSP amendments, and consultant selection, still require four affirmative votes regardless of the number of Directors appointed. In effect, these items would require a unanimous vote of the four Member Directors. In addition, under Article 9.1(a), while no Agricultural Director is seated, a contract for Executive Director, staff, consultant, or legal services may be approved by at least three votes, but only for a term not to exceed one year.

Recommendation

EMA GSA Staff recommend the Board of Directors review and consider approval of requesting that the Santa Ynez Water Group solicit applications for, and nominate Qualified Nominees to, the Agricultural Director and Alternate Agricultural Director positions in accordance with Article 7.2(f) of the JPA.

Attachment

Attachment A: July 16, 2024 Article 7 of the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency

imposed on Solvang.

ARTICLE 6 MEMBERSHIP

6.1 Members. The Members of the EMA GSA, as long as they have not withdrawn from this Agreement pursuant to Article 16, shall be:

- (a) City of Solvang;
- (b) Santa Barbara County Water Agency;
- (c) Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District; and
- (d) Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1.

6.2 New Members. Any entity authorized by SGMA and other applicable law to participate in the EMA GSA, that is not a Member on the Effective Date of this Agreement, may become a Member upon all of the following:

- (a) The approval of the Board of Directors as specified in Article 11.3;
- (b) Amendment of the Agreement in accordance with Article 17.2; and
- (c) Payment by the new Member of a pro rata share of all previously incurred costs that the Board of Directors determines have resulted in benefit to the new Member, and are appropriate for assessment on the new Member.

ARTICLE 7 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

7.1 Formation of the Board of Directors. The EMA GSA shall be governed by a Board of Directors ("Board"). Directors of the Board shall consist of one representative from each of the Members of the GSA pursuant to Article 6, and one representative

appointed by the Member Directors, initially as follows:

- (a) One Director representing Solvang;
- (b) One Director representing Santa Barbara;
- (c) One Director representing SYRWCD;
- (d) One Director representing ID No.1; and
- (e) One Director, appointed in accordance with Article 7.2 by the Member Directors listed in (a)-(d) above, specifically representing the agricultural interests of the EMA (the "Agricultural Director").

7.2 Appointment of Directors. Directors of the Board shall be appointed as follows:

- (a) The Director representing Solvang shall be appointed by resolution of Solvang's City Council.
- (b) The Director representing Santa Barbara shall be appointed by resolution of Santa Barbara's Board of Directors.
- (c) The Director representing SYRWCD shall be appointed by resolution of SYRWCD's Board of Directors.
- (d) The Director representing ID No.1 shall be appointed by resolution of ID No.1's Board of Trustees.
- (e) The Director of any new Member of the EMA GSA pursuant to Article 6.2 shall be appointed by resolution of the governing body of the new Member.
- (f) The Agricultural Director listed in Article 7.1(e) shall be appointed as follows:
 - (1) Upon request of the Board, the Santa Ynez Water Group, working in conjunction with other agricultural associations or entities having members or doing business within the GSA's boundaries, specifically including but not limited to the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, shall solicit applications for the Agricultural Director position through an open public process where such solicitation shall be publicly noticed in a newspaper of general circulation within the EMA and announced at no less than one public meeting of the EMA GSA. The Santa Ynez Water Group shall review all received applications and submit (i.e., nominate) one or more Qualified Nominees for the Agricultural Director position to the

Board, where a discussion of the review and nomination process must be provided by the nominating entity as part of an open public meeting of the EMA GSA.

(a) A "Qualified Nominee" need not be a member of the Santa Ynez Water Group, or any other agricultural association or entity having members or doing business within the GSA's boundaries, but shall satisfy the following qualifications:

- (i) Be an owner or representative of an owner of property located within the boundaries of the GSA and involved in Commercial Agriculture which produces at least 2 acre-feet per year of groundwater (as defined by SGMA and the EMA GSP) from within the boundaries of the GSA to support Commercial Agriculture on said property;
 - For purposes of these criteria, "Commercial Agriculture" means a commercial or family farming enterprise whose business is to cultivate the land for growing plants, vines, or other crops for consumption, fiber, biofuel, or raw materials, or the breeding, feeding, or raising of animals, livestock, or poultry for human consumption or other products, all resulting in the marketing and commercial sale of such products. The GSA may require submittal of documentation satisfactory to the GSA, including but not limited to applicable IRS forms, certifying that the property is used for Commercial Agriculture.
- (ii) Be a resident and registered voter within the boundaries of the GSA; and
- (iii) The Agricultural Director, or the owner he/she represents, may not be a party to any pending litigation against the GSA, other than as a party to a groundwater rights adjudication affecting the EMA.
- (iv) Amendments to these criteria may be adopted through resolution by a unanimous vote of the Member Directors.

(2) After the Santa Ynez Water Group has submitted one or more Qualified Nominees for the Agricultural Director position, the

Member Directors will consider said Qualified Nominees for appointment to the Board. Notwithstanding Article 11.3 of this Agreement, said appointment decision shall require a unanimous vote of all the Member Directors (or Alternates as applicable) during a publicly noticed meeting of the EMA GSA where the Directors from each of the Members (or Alternates as applicable) are present and each casts a vote. In the absence of a unanimous vote of approval and appointment by the Member Directors, the Member Directors may request the Santa Ynez Water Group to submit alternative Qualified Nominees in accordance with the process set forth above.

(3) The Agricultural Director shall be appointed for a term of two years but may be reappointed for multiple terms so long as that Agricultural Director is nominated by the Santa Ynez Water Group in accordance with the processes and requirements set forth above and unanimously approved and appointed by the Member Directors.

(4) If the Santa Ynez Water Group is unwilling or unable to select and submit one or more Qualified Nominees for the Agricultural Director position to the Board pursuant to the process set forth herein, the Board may request another agricultural association or entity having members or doing business within the GSA's boundaries to perform such process.

(g) Each Director representing a Member shall be an elected official of the appointing Member.

7.3 Alternate Directors. Each Director shall have one Alternate to act as a substitute Director for that Director. All Alternates shall be appointed in the same manner as set forth in Article 7.2. Alternate Directors shall not vote or participate in any deliberations of the Board unless appearing as a substitute for a Director due to absence or conflict of interest. If a Director is not present, or if a Director has a conflict of interest which precludes participation by the Director in any decision-making process of the Board, the Alternate Director appointed to act in his/her place shall assume all roles of the Director, and shall have the authority to act on behalf of the absent Director, including but not limited to participating in open session and closed session deliberations and casting votes on matters before the Board. An Alternate Director representing a Member shall be an elected official or staff of the appointing Member.

7.4 Requirements. Each Member Director and Alternate Member Director shall be appointed by resolution as set forth in Article 7.2. Member Directors and Alternate Member Directors shall serve at the pleasure of the governing body of the appointing Member. No individual Director or Alternate representing a Member may be removed

except by the vote of the governing body of the Member that appointed him/her. The term of a non-Member Director or non-Member Alternate appointed in accordance with Article 7.2 above shall be two (2) years, and such Director or Alternate may serve any number of consecutive terms upon re-appointment in accordance with Article 7.2 above; provided, however, that any non-Member Director or non-Member Alternate may be removed from his/her position at any time prior to the expiration of his/her then-current term based on a decision by the Member Directors, where notwithstanding Article 11.3 of this Agreement said removal decision shall be subject to the unanimous voting requirements of Article 7.2(f)(2) above.

7.5 Vacancies. Upon the vacancy of a Director, the Alternate Director shall serve as Director until a new Director is appointed as set forth in Article 7.2 above. Upon the vacancy of an Alternate, a new Alternate shall be appointed as set forth in Articles 7.2 and 7.3. A Member shall submit any changes in its Director or Alternate Director positions to the Board by providing a copy of its executed resolution.

7.6 Duties of the Board of Directors. The business and affairs of the EMA GSA, and all of its powers, including without limitation all powers set forth in Article 5, are reserved to and shall be exercised by and through the Board of Directors, or Member Directors where specifically set forth in this Agreement, except as may be expressly delegated to the Executive Director or other(s) pursuant to this Agreement, Bylaws of the GSA, or by specific action of the Board of Directors.

7.7 Director and Alternate Compensation. No Director or Alternate shall be compensated by the EMA GSA in connection with any meetings or other activities undertaken as a representative of the GSA. Nothing in this Article is intended to prohibit a Member from compensating its Director or Alternate for compensable activities undertaken as a Director or Alternate of the GSA Board.

ARTICLE 8 OFFICERS

8.1 Officers. Officers of the EMA GSA shall be a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Additional officers may be appointed by the Board as it deems necessary.

- (a) Chair. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and shall be a member of the Board.
- (b) Vice Chair. The Vice Chair shall exercise all powers of the Chair in the Chair's absence or inability to act, and shall be a member of the Board.
- (c) Secretary. The Secretary shall certify minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors and shall perform other duties and responsibilities as properly delegated by the Board. The Secretary may, but need not, be a member of the Board.
- (d) Treasurer. The Treasurer shall perform such duties and responsibilities specified in Government Code sections 6505.5 and

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SJV WATER: Knives are out for nascent groundwater agency struggling to govern its own "dead men walking" in Tulare County

[SJV Water](#) (<https://mavensnotebook.com/sjv-water/>) September 15, 2026

By Lisa McEwen, SJV Water

The Tule East Groundwater Sustainability Agency in southern Tulare County just can't seem to put a foot right.

The state is bearing down, demanding an end to overpumping that has sunk huge swaths of land – taking the critical Friant-Kern Canal with it. Surrounding farmers and water managers want action and they want it now. Tule East directors and staff are still dotting the "i"s to create a legitimate governing agency.

Meanwhile, Tule East farmers have apparently abandoned all restraint and are "pumping like it's the wild west" (<https://sjvwater.org/some-tulare-county-farmers-pumping-like-its-the-wild-west-with-no-oversight/>)." The situation is a mess, according to someone familiar with the process and the players who agreed to talk with SJV Water.

"What is left of Tule East is now just white area landowners," they said, referring to land that isn't covered by a water district, so is totally groundwater dependent.

"I mean they're dead men walking. Why should they walk any faster?"

STATE PLAN IN THE WINGS

The rest of the subbasin, though, wants those farmers sprinting as the state Water Resources Control Board is readying its own pumping plan to be released this fall and potentially imposed by January.

The key feature of that plan is a total pumping moratorium on land within two miles of the Friant-Kern Canal. The Water Board then plans to impose pumping reductions throughout the rest of the subbasin, which covers the southern half of Tulare County's flatlands.

This would be on top of probationary measures in place since 2024 under which farmers must meter and register their wells at \$300 each, report their extractions and pay the state \$20 per acre foot pumped. Under the new plan being drafted, the state would bump that to \$35 per acre foot.

The spectre of a pumping moratorium momentarily spurred Tule subbasin water managers to come together to work on some kind of collaborative plan.

But that effort ran off the rails a few weeks ago.

There is, apparently, a disconnect between the technical people dealing with the numbers – how much groundwater can be pumped without causing damage – and the policy people dealing with the political fallout of crimping ag, the region's main economic driver.

"It's frustrating when the technical staff make progress only to be told by the policy people that 'If this is what you guys are gonna come up with, then we're just going to go to litigation,'" our source told us.

COMING UP SHORT

In all the finger pointing, though, managers have lost sight of who the real arbiter is in this drama – the Friant Water Authority.

If Friant sees groundwater agencies making progress on pumping reductions, recharge, or other actions that it feels will protect its canal, that's the brass ring.

"If you can convince Friant Water Authority, then that goes a long way to the state saying 'this works,'" the source said.

But that means Tule subbasin groundwater agencies also have to work with and persuade their fellow water users, other Friant contractors down the line who've suffered as the canal sank, reducing its carrying capacity by 60%, and had to pay a share of the \$326 million it took to rebuild one section of the canal only to see it sink again thanks to continued excessive pumping.

"You gotta convince them that what you come up with will work. And so far, they said, 'No, we're not going along with it,'" SJV Water's source said.



A new section of canal, parallel to the Friant-Kern Canal, had to be built after the canal sank due to excessive groundwater pumping. SOURCE: Friant Water Authority



The new Tule East GSA board members in Sept. 2025. L-R: Bill Bennett; Matt Konda; Chairman Mike George; Tulare County Supervisor Dennis Townsend; and Jeff Giumarra. Lisa McEwen / SJV Water

Mike George, president of the beleaguered Tule East board, knows what his fellow water managers think. He's been accused of "slow-rolling this thing," he said at the GSA's packed Sept. 2 meeting referring to pumping limits.

"We've made a lot of progress in just a few short months. And I know it's frustrating as we work through these weighty issues that have a huge effect on all of us as landowners," he said, noting that Tule East's predecessor agency, the Eastern Tule GSA, left nothing in place for the new organization to work with, no plans, no funding, nothing.

So far, Tule East has a board and staff and it passed a land assessment fee expected to bring in needed money. For now, it's operating on what's left of a \$500,000 loan from Tulare County.

WORK HARDER, WORK FASTER

Those realities haven't softened calls for Tule East to establish strict pumping limits and a transparent groundwater accounting method.

"We are starting the rules and regulations discussion after today's board meeting," Tule East attorney Lauren Layne said at the Sept. 2 meeting. "Obviously, we cannot implement many of those items until we have the unified (groundwater plan) in place."

George would like a little grace from his fellow water managers, and the state, to put those and other measures in place.

That includes innovative efforts beyond just pumping limits.

For instance, the Hope Water District recently formed an improvement district and passed an assessment to fund a \$12 million pipeline system to bring surface water off the Friant-Kern Canal to about 3,000 acres.

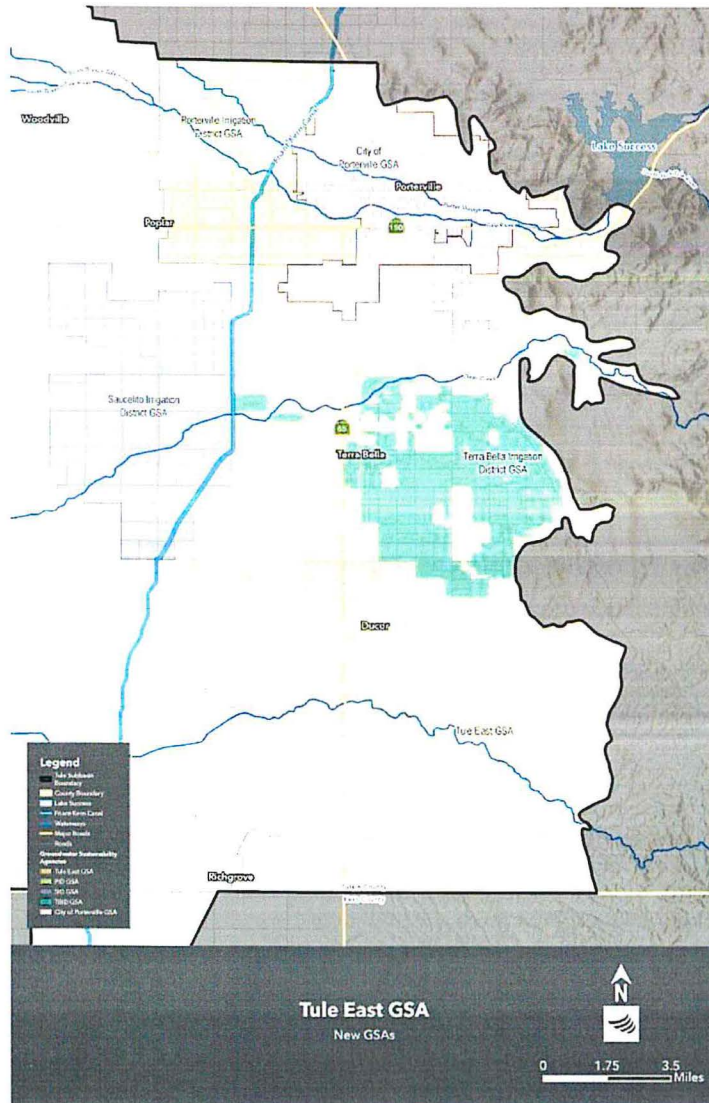
It will help address a "subsidence warm spot" within three miles of the canal, Hope president and Tule East board member Matt Konda said at the Sept. 2 meeting.

But if the state's moratorium goes through, farmers would be banned from pumping in that area and with no crops, the Hope plan would be dead.

"NO WORSE SPOT"

After all the years of acrimony and [recriminations](https://sjvwater.org/eric-r-quinley-the-most-hated-man-in-the-tule-subbasin/) that have roiled the Tule subbasin, is it too late for locals to change the region's trajectory?

According to our source: "The Tule subbasin was doomed by a lack of big picture thinking. Too many players were focused on protecting their territory and not seeing how groundwater is a connected resource that does not care about political boundaries."



Along with significant built-in challenges, such as an abundance of groundwater-only white lands, the Tule also had challenges of human nature.

Our source recalled how some board members saw the state requirement to monitor and account for groundwater as a potential "cash cow." He referred to the former Eastern Tule GSA that instituted a groundwater accounting system that created a [lucrative market](https://sjvwater.org/counting-groundwater-the-devil-is-in-the-details/) for certain landowners and did nothing to reduce pumping.

"That was never going to end well," SJV Water's source said.

Indeed, that accounting system was specifically questioned by the Water Board during a 2024 hearing that resulted in probation for the Tule subbasin.

"There are smart and well-intended landowners and professionals in the Tule subbasin, their vision can win the day," our source said. "It's not too late, but we are deep in the 9th inning, and the score is not in our favor."

For now though: "There's no worse spot to be in California ag than the Tule subbasin, and it shouldn't be that way."

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Clock is ticking for Kings County groundwater agencies to control their own fate

BY MONSERRAT SOLIS • [NEWS](#) • SEPTEMBER 23, 2026



Kings County groundwater agencies are now in a race to head off mandatory state pumping limits, which could be imposed by the end of 2027.

Water managers are scrambling to get a new, unified groundwater plan to the state Water Resources Control Board by April 2027 that they hope regulators will approve. But Water Board staff has already begun writing its own mandatory pumping plan for the region expected to be released next summer.

Given the severe subsidence, or land sinking, in the Tulare Lake subbasin, which covers most of Kings County, the state plan will likely include stringent pumping limits. Or even pumping moratoriums, as a recently released [state plan](#) could impose on farmers in the neighboring Tule subbasin.

Is it too late for Kings County farmers to escape a similar fate?

No, said one Water Board spokesperson.

"However, it's been over six years since adequate plans were required by SGMA, groundwater conditions are worsening, and this window of opportunity is closing quickly," Edward Ortiz wrote in an email.

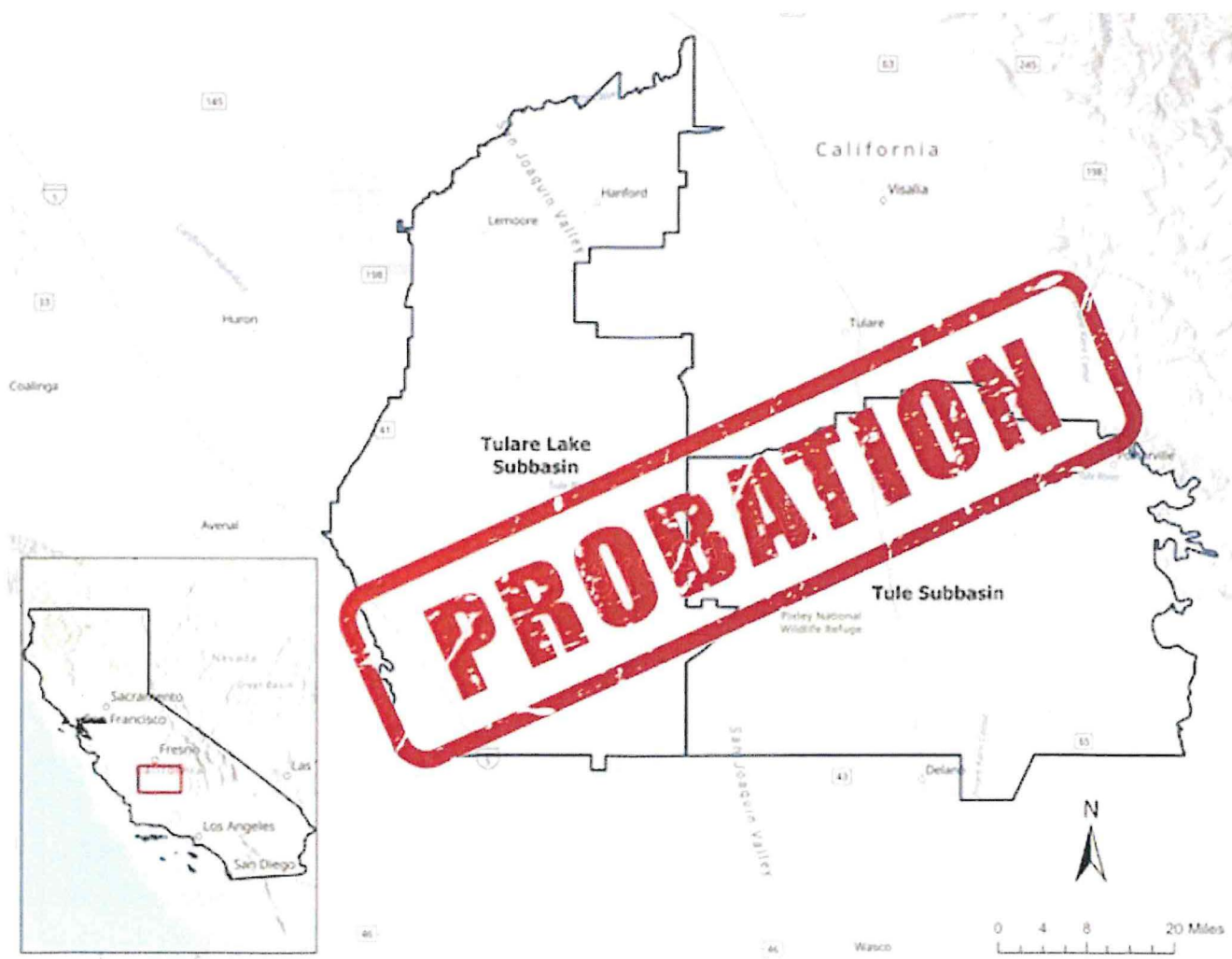
Amer Hussain, engineering consultant for four of the five Tulare Lake subbasin groundwater agencies, said he's been assured that if the region submits its plan by April 2027, Water Board staff would review it, even as they make their own plan.

"If either basin (Tule or Tulare Lake) develops and implements an adequate plan, (state pumping) plans will not be necessary. We hope the GSAs will fix their plans and implement quickly," Ortiz wrote.

Tulare Lake was placed on probation April 2024 by the Water Board for lacking an adequate groundwater plan that would stem subsidence and protect domestic drinking wells, among other issues.

Probation requires farmers to meter and register their wells annually at \$300 each, report their pumping to the state and pay the state \$20 per acre foot pumped. Under a state pumping plan, that fee would go up to \$35 per acre foot.

Farmers in Kings County have already reported pumping data to the state and are awaiting invoices, which may arrive as soon as [October](#).





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Project to reduce groundwater pumping near Friant-Kern Canal – damaged by excessive pumping – gets underway

BY LISA MCEWEN • [NEWS](#) • OCTOBER 3, 2026



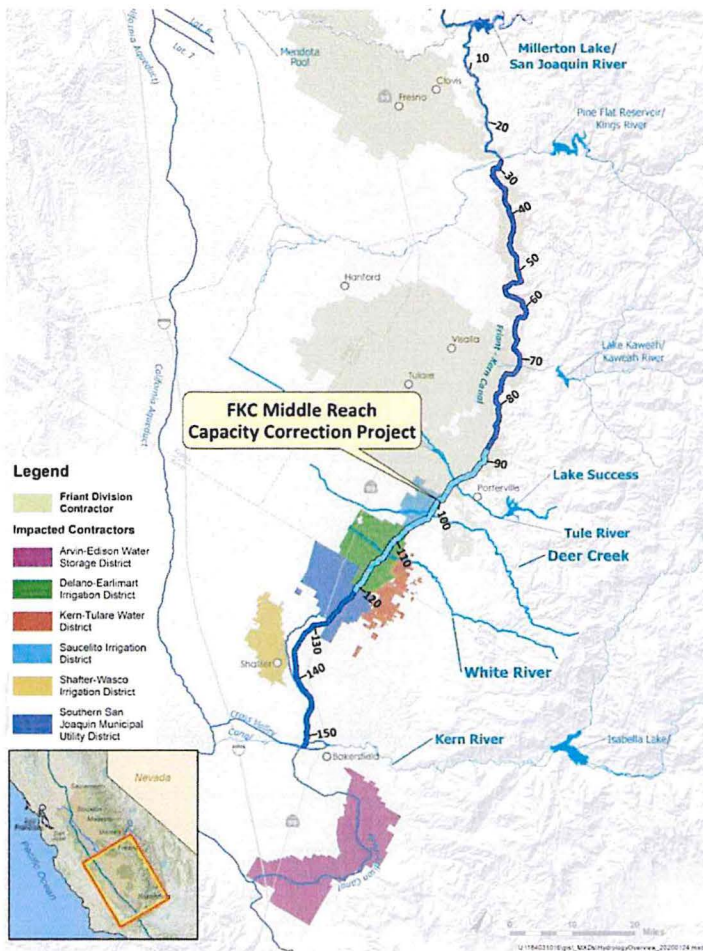
A groundbreaking ceremony in southern Tulare County last week signaled the start of another chapter in the long and expensive effort to fix the sinking Friant-Kern Canal.

Construction began on five new Friant Water Authority pump stations that will lift water out of the canal and into Tea Pot Dome Water District and Saucelito Irrigation District systems, reducing growers' reliance on groundwater. The project is expected to cost \$46 million and take two and a half years to complete.

More than \$500 million – so far – in local, state and federal funding has been dedicated to fixing the canal, which has sunk along a 33-mile section from about Pixley to the Kern County line due to excessive groundwater pumping. Friant is looking for up to \$400 million more to start the next phase of construction.

It's unknown yet exactly where that funding will come from.

"If the federal government helped build this critical piece of infrastructure, why should farmers alone be left to shoulder the entire burden of repairing the damage that threatens the system of such importance?" Friant Water Authority Executive Director Johnny Amaral asked during the groundbreaking.



Subsidence due to excessive groundwater pumping caused a 33-mile section of the Friant-Kern Canal to sink.

Amaral's statement hit on a politically sensitive question of public pay for private gain.

In fact, voters rejected Proposition 3 in 2018, which included \$750 million to fix the Friant-Kern Canal, largely because many voters questioned why taxpayers should pay to fix infrastructure that was damaged by farmers.

Amaral acknowledged the controversy over how pumping has damaged the canal, itself a fraught issue in the Tule subbasin, where the state is readying its own mandatory [pumping plan](#) that would bar pumping within two miles of the Friant-Kern Canal.

"We have been facing a hard truth," he said of subsidence damage to the canal and a [slew of lawsuits](#) that were recently settled.

"It's not an abstract engineering problem, and it's not a misunderstood problem. Frankly, it's a problem that we're still grappling with here on the east side. We definitely had debates and differences but that is gone now."



L-R: Interim Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation Adam Nickles; State Sen. Melissa Hurtado; Congressman Vince Fong; Friant Water Authority President Rick Borges; Tea Pot Dome Water District President Matt Leider; Congressman David Valadao; Saucelito Irrigation District President Steven Kisling; Friant Water Authority Executive Director Johnny Amaral. Lisa McEwen / SJV Water

Friant has so far spent \$326 million to build a brand new 10-mile section of canal alongside the old canal, which had sunk so badly the canal's carrying capacity was cut by 60%, meaning water contractors south of the crimp could not get their full deliveries.

Up until March, Friant was still figuring out a repayment plan for a portion of the federal dollars included in that \$326 million.

Then the Department of the Interior announced the same month that Friant would receive [\\$200 million for subsidence corrections](#) from a larger water infrastructure fund for western states.

Friant is expecting to begin the second phase of its reconstruction plan on the remaining 23 miles of damaged canal as it cobbles together the necessary money.

Friant had sued a local groundwater agency after it said the agency reneged on an agreement to have its farmers pay a certain amount in pumping fees toward canal repairs. It then tried to increase fees on several of its own contractor water districts to make up the costs, incurring more lawsuits.

Those suits have all been settled.

As the groundbreaking played out on the first day of the 2026-2027 water year, onlookers were hopeful the new pump stations would allow full water deliveries, plus extra during high flow years needed to replenish overpumped aquifers.

That hasn't been possible in recent years after land beneath the canal collapsed from over pumping.

Steve Kisling, farmer and president of Saucelito Irrigation District, told a crowd of growers, water managers and elected officials that current and future generations of farmers will benefit from this project.

"My father and grandfather both farmed before the (canal) was built," he said. "And they routinely reminded me how important and how valuable the surface water project and delivery system is," he said. "Now our surface water supply and delivery system is more important than ever."

Saucelito will get four pumps while Tea Pot Dome gets one. Another eight stations are planned downstream, part of Phase 2 of Friant's overall plan to address subsidence impacts.

Matt Leider, president of Tea Pot Dome Water District, said he was thankful Friant kept its promise to build the pump station, which was delayed due to funding constraints. The raft of lawsuits also sparked friction among Friant contractors, which played out in a [tense board meeting](#) last May.

Tea Pot Dome has a well near the canal that it uses to send water throughout its 3,400-acre district. The state Water Resources Control Board's proposed pumping moratorium near the canal means the new pump station will bring much-needed surface water into the district.

"Since SGMA was enacted, we've always been trying to figure out a way to not use that well," he said. "We don't want to hurt the very canal that brings us our supplies."

Meanwhile, Friant Water Authority is preparing to advance Phase 2A, which includes construction of approximately 2.7 miles of parallel canal from the Tule River to Avenue 136, where it will tie in to the origin of the Phase 1 parallel canal. Construction bids open Oct. 23.



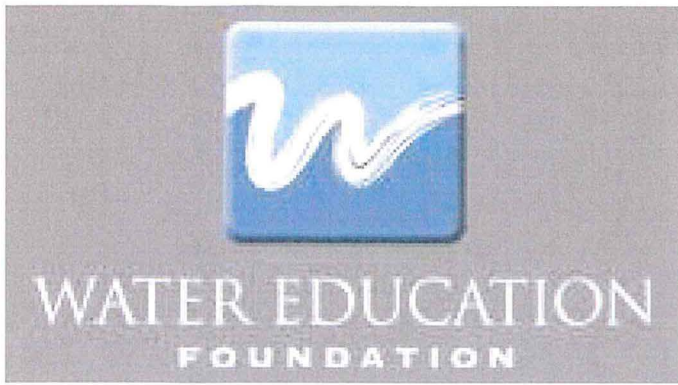
The Friant-Kern Canal in southern Tulare County. Lisa McEwen / SJV Water



Author

LISA MCEWEN

Related Articles



Western Water | October 8, 2026 | By Matt Jenkins

SUBSIDENCE FROM GROUNDWATER OVERDRAFT RISKS CHOKING OFF A VITAL WATER ARTERY FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

WESTERN WATER NOTEBOOK-FIXING THE SINKING CALIFORNIA AQUEDUCT COULD COST AS MUCH AS \$4 BILLION, BUT WHO SHOULD PAY THE BILL?

One of the major rationales for building California's two biggest surface water supply projects was to provide a supplemental source of water from Northern California so San Joaquin Valley farmers could reduce their reliance on groundwater.

The imported water, it was hoped, would lessen reliance on local groundwater and slow or even halt land subsidence caused by excessive pumping from the aquifers.

The idea didn't work as planned. Today, subsidence and the resulting damage to water infrastructure along California's [State Water Project \(SWP\)](#) and its sister, the federally run [Central Valley Project \(CVP\)](#), is widespread throughout the San Joaquin Valley, complicating efforts to keep water flowing.

But the stakes are highest on the SWP's 444-mile-long [California Aqueduct](#), a crucial artery in the state's water-supply system. Water flowing through the parts of the aqueduct "pinched" by subsidence serves some 24 million people along the Central Coast and in Southern California and 1.5 million acres of farmland. That pinch is getting worse.



A survey ribbon flutters in the breeze during subsidence repair work in 2021 along the California Aqueduct near Lost Hills in Kern County. (Source: California Department of Water Resources)

"We're at the tipping point where just a little bit more subsidence could have a significant impact on the system."

~Manny Bahia, infrastructure manager for State Water Contractors

Over the next 17 years, according to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), which operates the SWP, ongoing subsidence could cause the aqueduct's capacity to shrink by [nearly 90 percent](#).

"We're at the tipping point where just a little bit more subsidence could have a significant impact on the system," says Manny Bahia, the infrastructure manager for the State Water Contractors, a coalition of water agencies that rely on the California Aqueduct. "There's no more buffer to absorb any of this impact."

A plan to fix the problem is taking shape, but it could cost up to \$4 billion — and will raise hard questions about who's on the hook to pay.

'A Top Risk'

Subsidence in the San Joaquin Valley has been a known problem since roughly the 1920s and the debate about how to fix subsidence along the California Aqueduct has been quietly brewing for years. The aqueduct was actually designed with some allowance for anticipated subsidence. And so far, DWR has managed to goose the aqueduct along by operating it above its rated capacity, so that the long-term average delivery capability has only gone down by 3 percent. But the impacts are already being felt in other ways.

In the past, DWR could strategically pump water into and through the aqueduct when power costs were low. Now, however, it spends an additional \$10 million to \$20 million per year on average to buy the extra power it needs to keep water moving across the state more or less year-round.

Although several sections of the aqueduct have been affected by subsidence, the worst-hit section is a roughly 70-mile-long stretch running along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley north of Kettleman City. That section, known as the San Luis Canal, is jointly operated by DWR and the federal Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation).

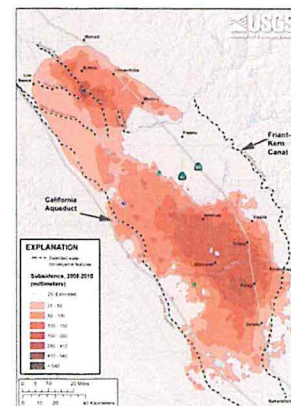
In 2006, DWR operators first noticed a reduction in flow capacity in a stretch of the canal near Kettleman City. Drought tends to make subsidence worse as water-short farmers and cities turn to groundwater to make up for reduced water from surface supplies and reservoirs. During a drought between 2013 and 2016, some parts of the aqueduct in the San Luis Canal section sank nearly three feet.

“That really got the department’s attention,” says DWR’s David Sarkisian. The agency launched a [comprehensive investigation](#), the results of which were published in 2017. “That painted the full picture of what was happening and elevated it to a top risk to the State Water Project.”

The following year, DWR established the California Aqueduct Subsidence Program (CASP), which Sarkisian now leads.

Meanwhile, California — which had the dubious distinction of being the last Western state to put comprehensive groundwater regulations in place — finally moved to do so. In 2014, the Legislature passed the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#), known as SGMA.

SGMA required 94 medium- and high-priority groundwater subbasins statewide to create Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and come up with plans to end excessive pumping by the early 2040s. That, at least in theory, provided a framework to halt overpumping.



[The California Aqueduct and Friant-Kern Canal cross areas where subsidence occurred from 2008 through 2010. Since then, continued groundwater pumping has caused additional subsidence in areas where the aqueduct and canal cross. \(Source: U.S. Geological Survey.\)](#)



[A USGS staff member marks the progression of land subsidence due to groundwater pumping along Highway 152 in Merced County. \(Source: U.S. Geological Survey.\)](#)

That 70-mile stretch of the aqueduct with the worst subsidence runs across land managed by the Westside Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), and which DWR has designated as a “critically overdrafted basin.” The GSA is overseen by Westlands Water District, the nation’s largest agricultural water district. But as Westside formulated its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and submitted it to the state for approval, DWR itself repeatedly challenged the adequacy of the plan in protecting the aqueduct from continued subsidence. It was joined by the State Water Contractors and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan), which has contracts for roughly half the total amount of water delivered through the State Water Project and serves roughly 19 million people in urban Southern California.

In a [2020 letter](#), Metropolitan noted that the Westside Subbasin GSA was planning to allow pumping at levels 53 percent greater than “safe yield,” and that “investment in rehabilitation projects will be wasted if subsidence continues to occur at the rate proposed by your GSP.” Last year, the State Water Contractors sent a letter warning that “the ongoing significant and unreasonable land subsidence that substantially interferes with the [San Luis Canal section] has devastating impacts on the SWP and must be adequately acknowledged and addressed in the GSP to comply with SGMA.”

DWR approved Westlands' revised GSP in August 2023 with additional corrective actions recommended. Since then, DWR officials have continued to raise concerns with Westlands over ongoing subsidence and its effects on the aqueduct.

In Pursuit of a Fix

DWR is currently moving forward with five "interim action projects" in critical sections of the aqueduct; those include raising the height of the aqueduct's concrete liner to allow more water to be pushed through and modifying control gates to eliminate hydraulic bottlenecks. Totalling \$75.4 million, the interim projects are scheduled to be finished over the next three years and have already secured state and federal funding.

The California Aqueduct threads its way down the west side of the San Joaquin Valley between orchards and farm fields. Groundwater overdraft has caused the aqueduct to sink, reducing its capacity to move water. (Source: California Department of Water Resources)

"Making sure those are underway as quickly as possible is a top priority," says Kristin White, a Bay Delta Initiatives program manager for Metropolitan, "so that we can have some immediate flexibility to maintain water deliveries."

But a much bigger fix is needed. And DWR has pegged the cost of bringing the aqueduct back up to its original design capacity at \$3.87 billion — a number the agency says is subject to an uncertainty range of "30 percent under and 50 percent over."

Last year, DWR began a consultation process that includes State Water Contractors, water contractors for the Central Valley Project, including Westlands, and representatives from Reclamation. Separate technical and policy work groups have been meeting at least monthly, largely to refine modeling and reach agreement on what future impacts of subsidence will be — and what it will take to address them.

"Really, this collaborative process is pulling a lot of different ideas and minds together to try to think as much outside the box as we can to keep this reliability and this critical water supply, but minimize the cost," White says. "We're hopeful that we'll get a result that's less than \$4 billion."

Construction workers make subsidence repairs in 2021 to the California Aqueduct near Lost Hills in Kern County. (Source: California Department of Water Resources)

Less costly alternatives to rebuilding the aqueduct to its original design capacity could include installing additional pumps along the canal or bypassing subsided areas.

Because the northernmost portion of the aqueduct — including the section that crosses the Westside Subbasin — is jointly operated by DWR and Reclamation, any work there would need to be evaluated and approved through a federal planning process known as an "extraordinary maintenance," or XM, study. Sarkisian says that the group of interested parties hopes to initiate that process by the first quarter of 2027.

That could open an avenue for federal funding for the big fix. It may also help bring more parties together to participate in the process.

"I'm hoping that's another outcome of these meetings, is that everyone gets behind an alternative," Sarkisian says. "And then if they get behind pursuing funding, that would be pretty powerful. So seeking alignment, we see as something that's important for the success of the program."

Settling Who Pays the Bill

Still, the groundwater pumpers causing the problem will also potentially be on the hook — a situation that's already led to one ugly fight elsewhere in the San Joaquin Valley.

The CVP's Friant-Kern Canal, which supplies San Joaquin Valley farms between Fresno and Bakersfield, has also been significantly impaired by subsidence, losing an estimated 60 percent of its conveyance capacity. The saga to fix that has already dragged on for roughly a decade: An initial \$326 million reconstruction of a 10-mile parallel stretch of that canal has been completed,

This aerial view of the Friant-Kern Canal in southern Tulare County shows a new canal built alongside 10 miles of the original canal, whose capacity has been cut by up to 60 percent because of land subsidence from nearby groundwater pumping.

but a comprehensive fix will likely require rebuilding a total of 33 miles at a cost that could ultimately reach \$1 billion.

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation)

The state and federal governments have contributed substantial amounts of funding to that effort. But local groundwater pumpers are on the hook for much of the Friant-Kern Canal cost — at one point, up to \$200 million — and the effort to recover that money turned into an acrimonious legal fight that is still being sorted out.

“We really need to figure out what the solution is and what level (of funding) are we talking about.”

~Kristin White, a Bay Delta Initiatives program manager for Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

The effort to fix the California Aqueduct will likely be similarly contentious. Earlier this year, Westlands’ board of directors — comprised of district landowners or their representatives — drew a pre-emptive line in the sand, [passing a resolution](#) asserting “that the damage to state and federal conveyance infrastructure caused by subsidence is not the product of wrongdoing on the part of Westlands or its growers; rather, it is one consequence of redistributing water that was stored behind farmer-funded dams and reappropriating it for environmental purposes (a public benefit). Therefore, the consequences of this policy decision should be borne by the public, and the impacts of water unreliability should be shared by all.”

For now, how to pay for a more comprehensive California Aqueduct subsidence fix is a question the parties participating in the CASP are carefully avoiding.

“These are questions that are in the back of everyone’s mind,” says White, of Metropolitan. “But we really need to figure out what the solution is and what level (of funding) are we talking about. Because a conversation about cost allocation for a \$4-billion project is drastically different from a conversation about a \$500-million project.”

DWR’s Sarkisian agrees, saying that the debate over how to fund a fix will come once there’s more clarity about what that fix will actually look like.

“We’re not there yet,” he says. “We’re just looking to continue to build on that momentum, and hopefully it’ll help us with those tougher conversations.”

Editors note: This story has been updated to note that Westlands’ revised Groundwater Sustainability Plan was approved by the California Department of Water Resources in August 2023.

Western Water, our flagship publication by Foundation journalists, is available online. Check out our [latest articles](#). Reach writer Matt Jenkins at mjenkins@watereducation.org.

Know someone who wants to stay connected to water in the West? Encourage them to [sign up](#) for Western Water and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS in the past several years, California has experienced increasingly severe and destructive storms, including atmospheric river events that have caused widespread flooding, mud and debris flows, landslides, high winds, power outages, road and highway closures, evacuation orders, damage to homes and critical infrastructure, and disruption of essential services; and

WHEREAS climate change is intensifying these weather and hydrologic extremes in California, contributing to increasingly severe swings between drought and flooding, and heightening the risks that extreme storms pose to communities, infrastructure, natural resources, and the economy; and

WHEREAS California is entering the 2026–2027 wet season amid the ongoing development of a strong and likely historic El Niño event in the Pacific Ocean; and

WHEREAS the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center, in its August 13, 2026, diagnostic report, found that the El Niño event is strengthening, with a greater than 90 percent chance of a very strong event during Northern Hemisphere fall and winter of 2026–2027; and

WHEREAS the Climate Prediction Center projected a 69 percent chance that the event will reach historic strength during the October through December 2026 season, defined as a three-month Relative Oceanic Niño Index, and exceeding the strength of all prior El Niño events in the historical record beginning in 1950; and

WHEREAS the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center has found that atmospheric conditions over the tropical Pacific are consistent with a strengthening El Niño, including changes in equatorial winds and an eastward shift in enhanced convection and rainfall toward the central and eastern Pacific, making it more likely that at least some parts of California will experience stronger storms in coming months; and

WHEREAS elevated baseline coastal water levels, combined with high tides, large waves, high surf, and coastal storms, can increase risks of coastal flooding, beach erosion, bluff erosion, transportation disruption, and damage to public and private infrastructure; and

WHEREAS California has already begun to experience effects attributed to this El Niño event, including unusual precipitation and significant coastal flooding; and

WHEREAS historical experience demonstrates that very strong El Niño events do not produce uniform statewide outcomes, but can be associated with exceptionally wet and destructive winter conditions in California; and

WHEREAS California's recent experience with atmospheric rivers, debris flows following wildfires, flash flooding, coastal erosion, inundation, and damage to transportation and flood-control infrastructure demonstrates the importance of procuring and positioning resources, clearing waterways, and taking additional actions to prepare before severe storms arrive; and

WHEREAS areas affected by recent wildfires are particularly susceptible to flash flooding, mud and debris flows, erosion, sediment transport, and road closures during high-intensity rainfall; and

WHEREAS in light of that experience, local governments, local water agencies, and local flood control authorities have requested action now to enable them to move quickly to begin preparations for preventing and responding to the impacts of potential flooding; and

WHEREAS low-income communities, farmworker families, rural residents, seniors, persons with disabilities, residents with limited transportation access, people experiencing homelessness, and communities in flood-prone, coastal, or post-fire areas may face disproportionate risks; and

WHEREAS the demonstrated potential for a very strong or historic-strength El Niño event to cause elevated coastal water levels and high-impact storms in California warrants early, coordinated, and targeted preparedness actions to protect Californians, critical infrastructure, agricultural lands, natural resources, and the State's economy; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8558(b), I find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist due to the developing El Niño event; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8558(b), I find that the developing El Niño event is likely to cause conditions that, by reason of their magnitude, are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of any single local government and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to appropriately respond; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8625(c), I find that local authority is inadequate to cope with the magnitude of the extreme peril posed by the developing El Niño event; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8571, I find that strict compliance with various statutes and regulations specified in this Proclamation would prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the developing El Niño event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes, including the California Emergency Services Act, and in particular, Government Code section 8625, **HEREBY PROCLAIM A STATE OF EMERGENCY** to exist statewide due to the developing 2026–2027 El Niño event.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. All agencies of the state government are to utilize and employ state personnel, equipment, and facilities for the performance of any and all activities consistent with the direction of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the State Emergency Plan. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall coordinate statewide preparedness activities for potential severe weather, flooding, coastal flooding, erosion, mud and debris flows, and related impacts associated with conditions resulting from the El Niño event, including atmospheric rivers and other severe storm systems. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall work with local and tribal governments to support emergency planning, resource coordination, and requests for state assistance. To protect their safety, all residents are to obey the direction of emergency officials with regard to this emergency.

2. As necessary to assist local governments and for the protection of public safety and the environment, state agencies shall enter into contracts to arrange for the procurement of materials, goods, and services necessary to quickly assist with the response to and recovery from the impacts of this emergency. Applicable provisions of the Government Code and the Public Contract Code, including but not limited to travel, advertising, and competitive bidding requirements, are suspended to the extent necessary to address the effects of this emergency.
3. The California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency, including boards, departments, and offices within those agencies, are directed to prioritize work to help local agencies prepare for anticipated impacts from the El Niño event. In particular, those state agencies are directed to prioritize permitting, consultation, and technical assistance to support local efforts to prevent or mitigate impacts from anticipated or potential flooding, landslides, and mud and debris flows, including local efforts to expedite levee and other flood management infrastructure repairs, vegetation management, debris removal, sediment management, bridge scour protection, and channel-capacity improvements. State agencies are directed to work with local agencies to issue any necessary permits or other approvals for such efforts as quickly as possible, including by identifying and invoking existing emergency authorities or other pathways for streamlined review. On or before October 16, 2026, the Secretary for Environmental Protection and the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency shall submit a joint recommendation to my office as to whether further action or emergency suspensions are necessary to support and expedite this work.
4. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall coordinate the State's preparation for and response to the developing El Niño event, including by working with the Department of Water Resources and other appropriate government agencies to prepare to pre-position personnel, equipment, supplies, commodities, and other resources based on forecast conditions, local needs, and identified risks. In particular, this work shall draw on the Department of Water Resources' guidance regarding flood-risk-reduction activities.
5. The Department of Water Resources shall take appropriate action to procure, maintain, stage, pre-position, distribute, and replenish flood-fight supplies, equipment (including, but not limited to, sandbags, riprap and other rock materials, plastic sheeting, and pumps), and other materials necessary to support statewide flood preparedness, response, and protective actions in connection with the El Niño event. The Department of Water Resources shall coordinate with appropriate government agencies to identify priority areas for flood-fight material staging and plans to make these materials available where they are needed, when they are needed.
6. The Department of Water Resources, through its Division of Safety of Dams, shall conduct outreach to owners of jurisdictional dams regarding potential severe conditions during the El Niño event and shall reiterate to dam owners their responsibilities to inspect, operate, maintain, repair, and safely manage their dams and appurtenant structures in accordance

with applicable law, permit conditions, emergency action plans, and directives of the Division of Safety of Dams.

7. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with the Department of Water Resources, shall conduct outreach to counties, cities, and relevant local agencies that are responsible for levees, flood-control facilities, and associated structures that may be vulnerable to impacts of the El Niño event to take appropriate actions to procure, maintain, stage, pre-position, distribute, and replenish flood-fight supplies, commodities, equipment, and materials necessary to support flood preparedness, response, and protective actions.
8. The Department of Water Resources, in coordination with the State Water Resources Control Board, shall conduct outreach and education to advance groundwater recharge projects and to use flood flows to recharge groundwater aquifers under existing law with the goal of reducing flood impacts and strengthening local water supplies.
9. Consistent with Paragraph 3 of this Proclamation, the Coastal Commission is directed to expedite review and action on proposed development by coastal communities to prepare for the impacts of this El Niño event. Coastal communities are encouraged to submit permit applications, as appropriate, to facilitate timely Coastal Commission review, technical assistance, and other support for El Niño preparations. After an application is received, the Commission shall respond with notification of any incomplete items within five days. After an application is complete, it shall be scheduled for hearing at the next Commission meeting. For emergency permit requests, the Commission shall accept both written and oral requests to its district offices. When necessary to address an urgent need related to this emergency, the Commission shall take action on emergency permit requests as quickly as possible and within twenty-four hours of receipt.
10. The California Department of Transportation and California State Transportation Agency shall identify those state highways, bridges, culverts, drainage facilities, slopes, and other transportation infrastructure most at risk of flooding, erosion, debris flows, rockslides, mudslides, or other significant impacts from severe storms caused by the El Niño event, and transmit to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services a prioritized list of projects to address such risks within 30 days of this Proclamation.
11. The California Department of Transportation shall develop plans to pre-position personnel and materials (including directional signage, traffic-control devices, road-closure devices, warning signs, delineators, emergency communications equipment, and other resources) at or near locations that may be identified as at risk of severe impacts from the El Niño event. This shall include plans to prepare and pre-position snow-removal, snow-control, and ice-control equipment as appropriate, including snowplows, snow blowers, graders, loaders, chain-control equipment, salt, sand, and other materials necessary to maintain safe travel and restore access on state highways during the El Niño event.
12. The Adjutant General and the California Military Department shall, in coordination with the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency

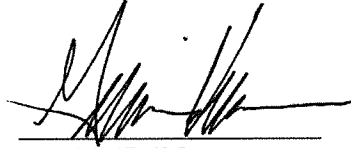
Services, identify California National Guard personnel, equipment, and capabilities that may be available to support state and local emergency operations, if activated or tasked, in relation to this El Niño event. Such planning shall include readiness for high-water vehicle operations; aviation operations, including reconnaissance, search and rescue, transport, and heavy-lift support, as appropriate; engineering support; emergency communications; transportation and logistics; evacuation support; flood-fight activities; debris removal and route clearance; commodity distribution; shelter support; and other life-safety and emergency-support missions.

13. California Volunteers, in coordination with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and other appropriate agencies, shall prepare to mobilize volunteers and trained service members, consistent with their training, mission, safety requirements, and applicable law, to support state and local preparedness, response, and recovery activities in connection with the El Niño event.
14. The California Conservation Corps shall prepare to deploy Corpsmembers, consistent with its statutory mission, training, available resources, safety requirements, and applicable law, to support severe weather preparedness and response activities in connection with the El Niño event.
15. The California Energy Commission, the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, and the State Water Resources Control Board and regional water quality control boards are directed, and the California Public Utilities Commission is requested, to coordinate, consistent with their respective authorities, with electrical, natural-gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications, transportation, and other critical-service providers to enhance readiness and support timely restoration of essential services following storm impacts.
16. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services, in consultation with relevant state agencies, shall expand accessible, multilingual public preparedness communications related to severe weather, flooding, emergency alerts, evacuation readiness, power outages, safe travel, disaster assistance, and household emergency planning.
17. Agencies under my direct authority shall cooperate in their response to this emergency. Other agencies are requested to assist in responding to this emergency, as appropriate.
18. The restrictions set forth in Penal Code section 396, which are automatically triggered upon proclamation of a state of emergency, are suspended, and no such restrictions are imposed, with respect to this El Niño event, at this time.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this Proclamation be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this Proclamation.

This Proclamation is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have
hereunto set my hand and caused
the Great Seal of the State of
California to be affixed this 21st day
of September 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Newsom', written over a horizontal line.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

SHIRLEY WEBER, PH. D
Secretary of State

When is the safest time to prepare?

Before the storm. Preparing an emergency kit, learning your evacuation routes, signing up for alerts and making a household plan takes very little time. Doing these things before an emergency makes a huge difference.

Can flooding happen where I live?

Yes. Flooding can occur throughout California, including in urban, rural, mountain, coastal and desert communities. Different areas face different types of flood risks, including river flooding, flash flooding, stormwater flooding, coastal flooding and debris flows. You don't have to live next to a river to be at risk.

How do I find out whether my home is at risk of flooding?

Start by checking your local flood-risk and hazard information. You can use [MyHazards](#) to identify hazards in your area. You can also check local [flood maps](#) and contact your city or county emergency management agency.

I have never flooded before. Do I still need to prepare?

Yes. Past experience does not guarantee that your property will not flood in the future. Flood risk can change because of development, changes to drainage systems, extreme rainfall, wildfires and other factors. The best time to prepare is before a storm.

What should I do before a major storm?

- Check the weather forecast and local emergency information.
- Sign up for emergency alerts.
- Know your flood risk and evacuation routes.
- Prepare an emergency kit.
- Make a household communication and evacuation plan.
- Plan for children, older adults, people with disabilities and pets.
- Clear debris from gutters and drainage areas around your property.
- Secure outdoor items that could become hazards.
- Know how to safely shut off utilities if necessary.

What should I keep in my emergency kit?

Consider keeping the following and check your supplies periodically to replace anything that has expired or is no longer usable.

- Drinking water
- Nonperishable food
- Medications
- First-aid supplies
- Flashlights and batteries
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Phone chargers or backup power
- Copies of important documents
- Cash
- Pet supplies
- Infant or specialized supplies
- Sturdy shoes and weather-appropriate clothing

Does homeowners insurance cover flooding?

Generally, standard homeowners insurance does **not** cover flood damage. Consider talking with your insurance provider about flood insurance, even if you live outside a mapped flood zone. Flood risk depends on many factors, including local levee systems, which can be overwhelmed by storms that exceed their design capacity. Flood insurance may also be less expensive in areas where coverage is not required. Don't wait until a storm is approaching to explore your options, as many policies have waiting periods.

Do I need flood insurance if I'm not in a flood zone?

You may still want to consider it. Flooding can occur outside mapped high-risk areas, and maps do not eliminate all flood risk. Talk with your insurance provider about your property's specific risk and coverage options.

What if I have an older family member or someone with a disability in my household?

Plan ahead for anyone who may need additional assistance during an evacuation. Consider transportation, medications, mobility equipment, medical devices, communication needs and where the person would go if your household needed to evacuate.

What if I live below an area that recently experienced a wildfire?

Be especially alert during heavy rain. Wildfires can alter the landscape and increase the risk of flash flooding, mudflows and debris flows in areas downslope from burn scars. Monitor local forecasts and emergency alerts and follow evacuation instructions.

How will I know if I need to evacuate?

Subscribe to your community's emergency alert system to receive evacuation notices and other urgent updates by text, phone or email. Follow evacuation orders from local emergency officials and leave promptly. Use designated evacuation routes, and take essential supplies, medications, important documents and pets if it is safe to do so.

Can I drive through a flooded road if the water doesn't look very deep?

No. Turn around! Floodwater can be deeper and move faster than it appears. It can hide damaged pavement, debris and other hazards, and even relatively shallow moving water can make a vehicle difficult to control. If a roadway is flooded, find another route and follow instructions from local officials. Always turn around when it is safe to do so. If you become trapped, call 911 when possible and follow emergency officials.

ENVIRONMENT

Newsom vetoes Delta levees bill as El Niño winter looms



BY RACHEL BECKER
SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

Republish



A flooded field near a section of the Cosumnes River near Wilton on Jan. 18, 2023. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

IN SUMMARY

- Newsom said money in the budget makes the levee bill redundant.
- State estimates put Delta levee repairs at roughly \$3.3 billion.

Even with an El Niño winter looming and memories of flooding still fresh, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill aimed at shoring up the Delta's aging levees and protecting the region and vital water infrastructure from flooding and sinking land.

In his veto message, Newsom said the more than \$170 million for repairing levees, aqueducts and canals and other projects already included in the state budget made the measure redundant.

“While well-intentioned,” Newsom said, “this bill is unnecessary.”

But the state's own data shows that this funding is nowhere close to what's needed to protect the Delta, both as a region and as the heart of the state's water supply.

A \$3.3 billion repair job

A network of 1,100 miles of federal and non-federal levees lines Delta waterways and protects the region from flooding. Many of these aging levees do not meet current “construction standards and could fail at water levels well below the top of the levee,” the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said in 2018.

The price tag for fixing them: roughly \$3.3 billion, according to the state's Delta Stewardship Council. Not fixing them could cost far more: “\$22 billion in assets and over \$5 billion in annual economic activity could be ... exposed to flooding in 2085 if improvements are not made.”

State Sen. Jerry McNerney, a Democrat from Stockton, wanted to create a \$300 million annual repair fund for these aging levees, including from proceeds generated by the state's embattled carbon market. The Delta Caucus secured a little over half that this year in the state budget. The bill eventually dropped the larger funding number.

The state has spent hundreds of millions already, including at least \$400 million by the Department of Water Resources, according to a bill analysis.

The fund also would have paid to repair the massive water delivery system that pumps Northern California river water south through the Delta, supplying two-thirds of the state's population and vast tracts of Central Valley farmland.

Sinking land threatens water deliveries

Groundwater overuse is damaging this system, including the California aqueduct and other vital canals, by causing the land around it to sink. A state report found the damage could cut water deliveries by almost 90% in the next 17 years. The California Department of Water Resources estimates that fixing the damage, both past and future, could cost nearly \$4 billion.

The bill passed the Legislature unanimously, with no votes against and five members not voting. It drew overwhelming support from water agencies and local governments across the state, as well as environmental and business groups — who often find themselves on opposing sides of legislation.

The California Central Valley Flood Control Association, however, urged Newsom in a letter to veto the bill, saying it could disrupt existing funding programs and create additional bureaucracy around already complex reimbursement processes.

Supporters push back on veto

The bill “brought together traditional adversaries on California water issues — environmental groups and State Water Contractors, along with political leaders from both Northern and Southern California,” McNerney said in a statement. “As a result, 2026 represented (a) major step forward in the effort to safeguard the state's primary water supply for the future.”

Restore the Delta is less sanguine. The Stockton nonprofit compared the bill to one of Newsom's signature water projects: the Delta Conveyance Project, also known as the Delta tunnel.

Like the bill, the tunnel is meant to shore up the state's water delivery system against time, climate change and disaster. But the tunnel's \$20 billion price tag would go toward bypassing the Delta rather than protecting it.

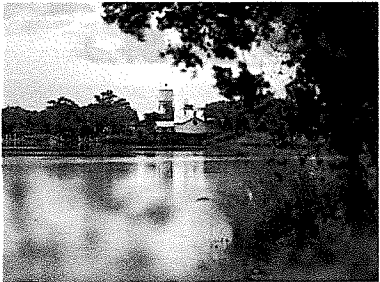
“It is (Newsom's) white whale,” Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director at Restore the Delta, said in a statement.

Delta advocates say money should go toward shoring up the Delta itself.

McNerney called the veto disappointing but described the amount of this year’s funding historic.

“We’re not done,” he said in a statement after the Legislature’s budget vote earlier this month. “This historic investment is just a down payment. In the years to come, we need to continue to protect California’s primary supply of freshwater.”

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Miles of Delta levees are at risk of floods. Repairs could cost \$3 billion

APRIL 9, 2025



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State's high court to hear Kern River case in Redding next month

BY LOIS HENRY • NEWS • SEPTEMBER 17, 2026



California Supreme Court justices will hear oral arguments on a key piece of the ongoing lawsuit over Kern River flows Oct. 7 at a special session of the court to be held in Redding.

The hearing will begin at 9 a.m. at the University Preparatory School, 2200 Eureka Way. Those interested in attending may want to get a seat early as this is part of the court's student outreach program so local high school students and teachers will fill much of the venue. The proceedings will also be broadcast via livestream at <https://supreme.courts.ca.gov/>. Archives of the hearings are typically posted to the court's webpage two weeks to a month later.

The last time justices ruled on a case involving the Kern River was 140 years ago. That 1886 ruling set the basis for California's water rights system.

This time around, the outcome could be just as weighty.

Justices are looking at whether the 5th District Court of Appeal erred when it overturned a temporary injunction by Kern County Superior Court Judge Gregory Pulskamp issued in fall of 2023 after an epic water year filled the mostly dry river bed through town – bringing fish with it.

That injunction had required the City of Bakersfield, which operates the river, to
some water in the river based on California Fish and Game Code Section

5937, which requires dam owners to let enough water run downstream to keep fish in good condition.

But the city, and several agricultural water districts with river rights, said Pulskamp should have first determined how much water was needed by fish and then weighed that need against other needs to determine if it was reasonable and beneficial, as is required by Article X, Section 2 of the California Constitution.

The plaintiffs, Bring Back the Kern, Water Audit California and several other public interest groups, argued that 5937 is unambiguous and that it was enacted in furtherance of Article X, Section 2, thereby, making water for fish an automatically reasonable and beneficial use.

The Fifth District Court of Appeal sided with Bakersfield and the ag districts and overturned Pulskamp's injunction in April 2025. The plaintiffs, then, appealed to the Supreme Court, which agreed to hear the case in July 2025.

Because Fish and Game Code 5937 has been used in several other river conservation cases throughout California, this case has been closely watched by numerous environmental groups and the Attorney General's office, which filed "friend of the court" briefs in support of Pulskamp's interpretation of the law.

A Supreme Court ruling could uphold or upend decades of river conservation case law.

Attorneys for all sides did not comment, other than to say they are still working out logistics on who will make arguments for which entity.

Typically, each side has 30 minutes to argue but the ag districts, which aren't defendants but are considered "real parties in interest" to the case, have filed a motion to get their own 30 minutes.

Attorneys for Bring Back the Kern and Water Audit California and Bakersfield have opposed that motion, which justices have yet to rule on.

After oral arguments on Oct. 7, the Supreme Court has 90 days to issue its written opinion. If either side is dissatisfied with that ruling, the only other next step would be the U.S. Supreme Court.

Back in 1886, when the Supreme Court ruled that riparian rights trumped appropriative rights, combatants Henry Miller and James Ben Ali Haggin could

have taken it up to the U.S. Supreme Court. But after more than 10 years of legal battles, they were tired of fighting and cut a deal instead.

For part of the year, Miller would get 1/3 of the river's flow delivered to his lands west of Bakersfield. The rest of the year, Haggin and other upstream users would divvy up the rest. That 1888 Miller-Haggin agreement remains in place to this day as a foundational document governing how the river is operated.

Depending on how justices rule this time, the underlying lawsuit that spawned the injunction testing Fish and Game Code 5937 could move forward as is, or change substantially.

Right now, trial in that case is set to begin Oct. 4, 2027.



Author



LOIS HENRY

CEO and editor Lois Henry has spent 30 years covering the San Joaquin Valley.

She was raised on a ranch east of Fresno and attended Fresno State where she majored in Journalism.

In Bakersfield she covered a variety of beats including the military, social services, the oil industry, city and county government and did a stint in Sacramento at The Californian's capitol bureau.

Henry spent 10 years as a manager and was the lead editor for the paper's many award-winning projects.

In 2007, she began a twice weekly, investigative column and was able to focus on one of her passions – water.

Valley residents innately understand the importance of water. Henry has helped develop that understanding by untangling the complicated knots of rights, lawsuits, contracts and deals by which water is moved and consumed.

She plans to continue that mission through SJV Water.

Henry lives with her husband, one dog and two very spoiled cats in Bakersfield.

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DWR Completes Major Rehabilitation of Oroville Dam's River Valve Outlet System

Published: Sep 30, 2026

OROVILLE, Calif. – The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced today the completion of a \$235 million project to rehabilitate Oroville Dam’s river valve outlet system (RVOS), ensuring the continued operation of a critical feature of the dam for decades to come. This upgrade improves operational reliability, protects fish populations, and strengthens the State Water Project’s resilience to climate-driven extreme heat and drought.

Oroville Dam, the tallest dam in the United States at 770 feet, is a cornerstone of the State Water Project, providing flood protection to downstream communities, water supply, clean energy generation, and recreation while supporting Feather River habitat for endangered and threatened fish species. Constructed between 1961 and 1967, the earthen dam towers over the northern Sacramento Valley.

The RVOS is located deep within one of the dam’s early diversion tunnels and allows DWR to release cold water from the deeper portions of Lake Oroville into the Feather River. That capability is especially important during periods of extreme heat and drought, when colder releases can help reduce downstream water temperatures and support fish populations.

“This investment in Oroville Dam’s infrastructure ensures the reliable and safe operation of the State Water Project’s largest flood protection and water supply facility,” said John Yarbrough, Deputy Director of DWR’s State Water Project. “DWR will continue to prioritize modernization projects to improve aging infrastructure in an ever-changing climate.”

California summers are becoming hotter as climate patterns shift and prolonged droughts can significantly reduce available water supplies. During extended dry periods, when Lake Oroville’s water storage drops, frigid water released from the bottom of the reservoir helps support fish populations in the Feather River and at the Feather River Fish Hatchery. DWR carefully monitors water temperatures to maintain suitable conditions for fish and meet environmental regulations.

“Part of DWR’s mission is to operate State Water Project facilities to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment,” Yarbrough said. “This includes operating the Oroville-Thermalito Complex facilities in a way that supports Central Valley fish populations including Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, which spawn each year in the Feather River below the dam.”

Construction on the RVOS project started in October 2022, with a large multidisciplinary team overseeing several construction contracts. The project’s location deep at the base of Oroville Dam also required creative construction management.

Rehabilitating the RVOS was highly complex, said Jason Blabec, DWR principal engineer and project manager. “It required immense coordination with contractors in a small space, all while ensuring that Hyatt Powerplant met its green energy commitments and cold-water release requirements. The years-long project required barges to transport valves, materials, and equipment, the installation of temporary bulkheads to permit work on valve infrastructure, and other creative construction methods. Because this system is critical to Oroville Dam’s operations, all phases of the work required high construction standards and safety protocols.”

Construction firms Syblon Reid of Folsom and The Dutra Group of San Rafael formed a joint venture to complete this major infrastructure rehabilitation project. Commissioning of the valve system was completed in June.

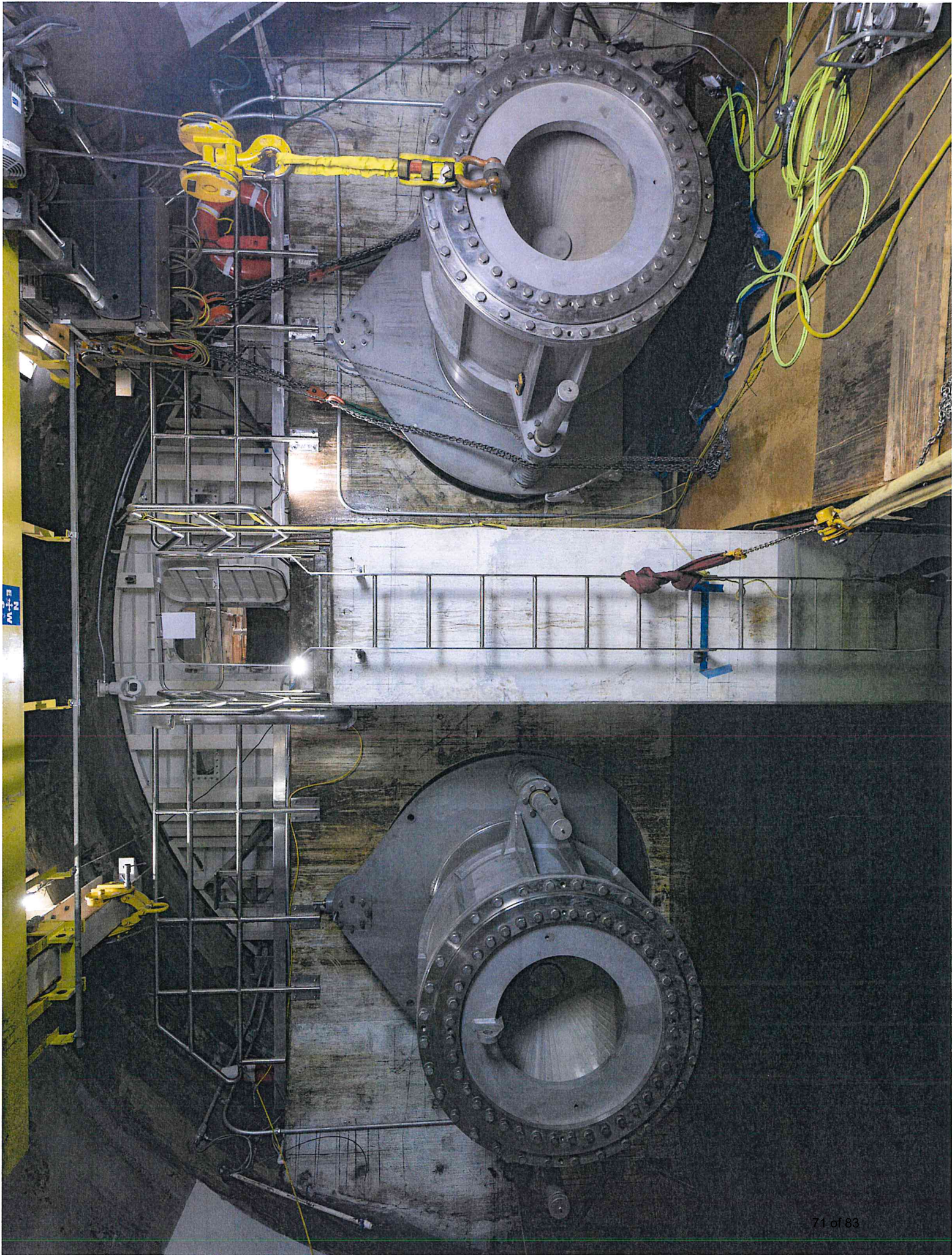
Completion of the RVOS rehabilitation is part of DWR’s ongoing investment in Oroville Dam and other State Water Project facilities to ensure they continue to reliably serve California’s people and environment for decades to come. To learn more about the State Water Project, visit [DWR’s website](#).

Additional Media Resources:

- [Pixel Photo Gallery](#) featuring images throughout construction
- VIDEO: [Oroville Dam’s River Valve Outlet System Rehabilitation Project](#)

Contact:

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Monthly Briefing

A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2026 • Issue #290

Board Member Quote of the Month



“Fallowing farmland is like taking timber harvest out of a timber town. Inevitably, that community will wither away and never be the same again. The decisions we make about water, forests and farmland aren't just decisions about natural resources — they're decisions about whether rural communities have a future. We need to manage these resources for the long term and make sure the West can continue to produce food, sustain communities, and support the economy. This has been a challenging year for Western farmers and ranchers, but their strength and resilience continue to show what this industry is capable of — and that resilience gives us the energy to keep leading and fighting for the future.”

—Clinton Pline, Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors, Idaho

CONTENTS

<u>Farmer Lobbyist Trip: Western Water Priorities in Washington</u>	2
<u>Congress Returns With a Long To-Do List, Then Quickly Exits</u>	3
<u>Bipartisan Permitting Reform Package Targets Project Delays</u>	5
<u>California Bay-Delta Plan Moves Toward Final Decision</u>	7
<u>Colorado River Enters a New Operating Era</u>	8
<u>Annual Conference: Growing the Pie in Reno, October 28–30</u>	9

Farmers, Ranchers and Water Managers Take Western Water Priorities to Washington D.C.

More than 30 farmers, ranchers and irrigation managers from across the West traveled to Washington, D.C., in September for the Family Farm Alliance's Annual Farmer Lobbyist Trip. Over three days, members met with federal agency officials, Congressional staff and Members of Congress to discuss the challenges facing Western irrigated agriculture and the investments needed to keep farms, ranches and rural communities productive. The message was straightforward: Western irrigated agriculture is under pressure, but water security is a solvable challenge.



The U.S. Capitol, where more than 30 Alliance members carried Western water priorities in September.

Historic drought, aging infrastructure, declining commodity prices and rising input costs are creating significant challenges for producers. At the same time, water managers are working to operate aging systems, respond to changing hydrology and navigate increasingly complex regulatory requirements. For more than 120 years, federal investment and partnerships have played an important role in helping the West develop and manage its water supplies. Alliance members emphasized that those partnerships remain important today, particularly as Western communities confront a monumentally difficult water year.

Responding to Drought — and Preparing for What Comes Next

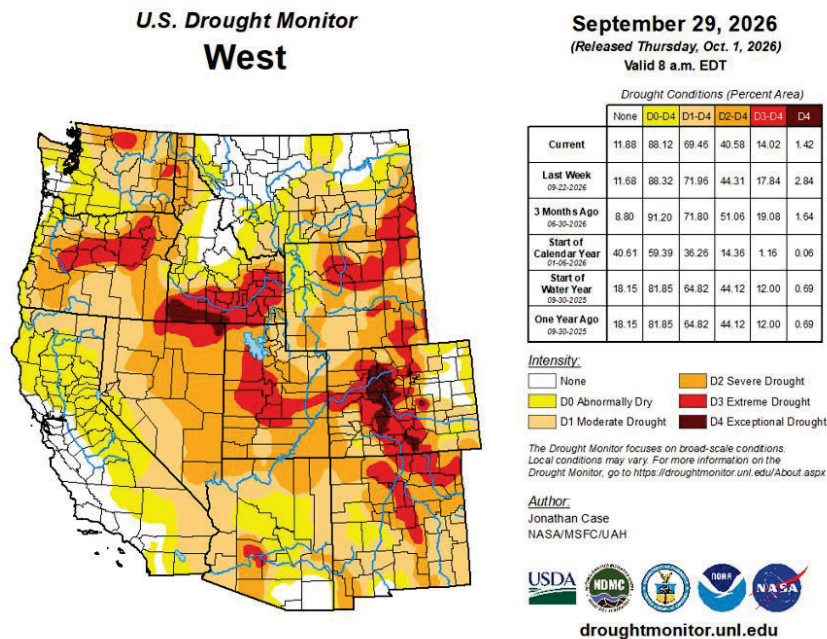
Drought and infrastructure funding were central topics throughout the trip. Every state in the West is experiencing some level of drought this year, with many basins facing historically low runoff and severe water shortages. Alliance members discussed the need for both immediate assistance and long-term investment. In the short term, agricultural water users need resources for temporary, compensated and voluntary water transfers, conservation measures that produce immediate savings, and relief from water and power project costs that continue even when deliveries are reduced or eliminated.

Members also urged Congress to provide \$2 billion per year for five years to help Western irrigators and rural communities respond to the current crisis, prepare for changing hydrology and improve drought resilience. Looking beyond the immediate crisis, members emphasized the importance of sustained investment in storage, conveyance, system modernization and new water supplies. Programs such as WaterSMART, Reclamation's Storage and Aging Infrastructure programs and USDA's PL-566 program provide tools for communities already working to improve water reliability.

Removing Barriers to Water Projects

Members also raised concerns about the time and cost required to complete water infrastructure and other projects. In many parts of the West, projects that could improve water efficiency, increase storage or modernize

delivery systems can take years to navigate through federal environmental reviews. The Alliance supports efforts to accelerate project delivery while maintaining appropriate environmental protections, including reforms to NEPA and implementation of the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act.



U.S. Drought Monitor, West region, September 29, 2026.
Every Western state is experiencing some level of drought this year.

efficiency. Alliance members emphasized that meeting the West’s long-term water needs will require developing new supplies alongside continued conservation and modernization. Desalination, water recycling, aquifer recharge, precipitation enhancement, precision irrigation, soil-moisture monitoring, canal automation and other technologies are already being deployed in communities across the West. The challenge now is moving proven ideas from pilot projects to broader implementation.

The Annual Farmer Lobbyist Trip gave the people managing water and producing food on the ground an opportunity to explain these realities directly to federal policymakers.

As Alliance members continue that work, the goal remains consistent: keep reliable water supplies available to Western farms and ranches while investing in the infrastructure, technology and partnerships needed to adapt to a changing West.

Congress Returns to Washington With a Long To-Do List – then quickly exits

Congress returned to Washington following its August recess with a long list of unfinished business — and not much time on the legislative calendar to address it. The immediate priority was keeping the federal government

Members also discussed the ongoing realignment of the Bureau of Reclamation and the importance of giving local water managers greater flexibility to manage projects efficiently. The Alliance has consistently advocated for collaboration over litigation, and members highlighted examples from across the West where farmers, water managers, tribes, states and other stakeholders are working together on voluntary solutions that benefit both agricultural production and environmental resources.

Building the Next Generation of Water Supply

The conversations in Washington also looked beyond conservation and

funded. Congress ultimately approved and President Trump signed a continuing resolution funding the government through December 11, avoiding an October 1 shutdown. The measure passed the Senate 90–6 and the House 370–48. That gives lawmakers additional time to complete the FY2027 appropriations process, but it also sets up another significant funding deadline late in the year. The House has advanced all 12 appropriations bills through committee and passed three on the floor, while the Senate process has moved more slowly.

Water Infrastructure Funding Remains a Concern

The Administration's FY2027 budget proposal called for substantial reductions in federal support for water infrastructure, including major proposed cuts to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. The proposal also would reduce or eliminate funding for programs supporting water storage, reuse, desalination and USDA watershed projects. While Congress rejected many similar reductions during the FY2026 process, the proposal reflects an ongoing debate over the federal role in financing water infrastructure.

For Western water users, the issue goes beyond any single program. Federal investment in storage, conveyance, aging infrastructure, conservation and new water supplies remains an important part of preparing communities for changing hydrology. As Congress works through FY2027 appropriations, the Alliance will continue to monitor funding levels for the programs that support those efforts.

Permitting Reform Moves Forward

Permitting reform also remains an important issue for water and infrastructure projects. Federal environmental reviews can add years and significant costs to projects that would improve water delivery, storage and system efficiency. There has been some movement in Congress. In late September, a bipartisan group of senators announced an agreement on a permitting reform package addressing environmental review timelines, litigation and interagency coordination for major infrastructure and energy projects. A vote is expected after the November elections, although additional negotiations and amendments remain possible.

The Administration is also pursuing permitting changes through regulatory and administrative actions, including efforts to streamline historic-preservation reviews and changes to EPA permitting requirements. For Western water managers, the broader question remains how to maintain appropriate environmental review while allowing needed water infrastructure and modernization projects to move forward in a reasonable timeframe.

Farm Bill Still Waiting

There is no substantial movement to report on the Farm Bill. The legislation remains stalled, despite its importance to agricultural producers and the conservation programs that support water efficiency and watershed health. Programs such as PL-566 and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program remain important tools for locally driven conservation and infrastructure projects. The Alliance will continue tracking negotiations as Congress considers whether there is an opportunity to move Farm Bill legislation later this year.

Natural Resources Oversight Continues

The House Natural Resources Committee has also continued its oversight activity. In September, the Committee opened an investigation into 19 environmental organizations regarding their use of federal fee-shifting provisions under laws including the Endangered Species Act, NEPA and the Equal Access to Justice Act. The Committee is seeking information about litigation practices and attorney-fee awards as part of its broader examination of federal natural-resource policy. The Committee is also continuing to examine water rights, habitat management,

federal lands and other issues directly relevant to Western agriculture and water users.

What Comes Next

With the November elections approaching, the legislative calendar is compressed. Government funding, the Farm Bill, permitting reform, water and infrastructure legislation and other major measures will compete for limited floor time during the remainder of the year. For the Alliance, the priority remains consistent: making sure Western farmers, ranchers and irrigation managers have a voice as Congress considers the investments and policies that will shape water reliability and agricultural production across the West.



Farm Bill conservation programs help fund irrigation efficiency on Western farms.

Bipartisan Permitting Reform Package Takes Aim at Federal Project Delays

A bipartisan group of Senate committee leaders released a major permitting reform proposal September 30 that could have significant implications for Western water infrastructure and other projects requiring federal approvals. The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act was developed over months of negotiations by the leaders of the Senate Environment and Public Works and Energy and Natural Resources Committees. The bill is sponsored by EPW Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), ENR Chair Mike Lee (R-UT), EPW Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and ENR Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM). The more than 400-page proposal is intended to accelerate federal reviews and provide greater certainty for energy and infrastructure projects. Importantly for Western water users, many of its permitting reforms would apply well beyond energy projects, including water, transportation, housing, manufacturing, and other infrastructure.

Faster Environmental Reviews

The legislation would establish firm deadlines for environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): two years for environmental impact statements and one year for environmental assessments. It would also establish a 150-day window for challenging federal approvals under NEPA, the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act. In general, parties would have to participate in the public comment process to bring a subsequent challenge. For water managers accustomed to projects stretching through years of review and litigation, the proposed deadlines could provide greater predictability for projects involving storage, conveyance, system modernization and other infrastructure.

Changes to the Endangered Species Act

The proposal also addresses the federal Endangered Species Act consultation process. It would shorten the standard formal Section 7 consultation period from 90 to 60 days and reduce the maximum extension from 150



Canal modernization projects can spend years in federal review.

to 100 days without the applicant's consent. For projects requiring NEPA review, consultation would have to be completed within the applicable NEPA deadline. The bill would also allow states to assume Section 7 consultation responsibilities under agreements with the Department of the Interior, while preserving an applicant's ability to work directly with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other provisions would establish a statutory definition of the "best scientific and commercial data available," require Interior to consider qualifying state-collected data in certain listing and delisting decisions and exempt some activities from consultation requirements.

Narrowing Historic Preservation Reviews

The bill proposes substantial changes to Section 106 reviews under the National Historic Preservation Act. Among other provisions, it would narrow the definition of a federal "undertaking" and establish specific deadlines for determining whether a project is subject to review, evaluating effects and completing consultation. The proposal also would narrow the definition of "adverse effect" to focus on reasonably foreseeable, direct physical changes to historic properties. Certain visual, noise, atmospheric and temporary effects generally would not qualify. For continually operated water and power facilities, where historic-preservation reviews can contribute to significant project delays and costs, these changes could be particularly relevant.

Greater Permitting Certainty

Another provision would limit an agency's ability to revoke an already-issued permit except under narrow circumstances. The proposal also contains changes to Clean Water Act permitting and Section 401 certifications, although the most specific Section 401 provisions apply to natural gas pipelines and interstate transmission lines rather than water projects generally. The legislation includes a number of energy-specific provisions as well, including changes to interstate transmission authority, cost allocation and large electricity users such as data centers.

What Happens Next?

The legislation is not yet law, and substantial questions remain about its path through Congress. No vote is expected until the post-election lame-duck session. Senate leaders have indicated that the bill could be among the first measures considered when the Senate returns in November. The bipartisan sponsorship is notable, but agreement within both parties has not yet been secured. Additional changes are expected as lawmakers continue reviewing the proposal, and its reception in the House remains uncertain.

For the Family Farm Alliance, this is an important proposal to watch because permitting reform is ultimately about more than energy development. The ability to complete water storage, conveyance, modernization and other infrastructure in a predictable timeframe is increasingly important as Western communities adapt to

changing hydrology. The Alliance will continue monitoring the legislation as it moves through the lame-duck session. Members should also keep in mind that the current proposal is a starting point, not a final product, and provisions may change significantly before any legislation reaches the President.

California Bay-Delta Plan Moves Toward Final Decision

After years of negotiations, scientific review and stakeholder engagement, California's long-running effort to update management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta is approaching a critical decision point. The California State Water Resources Control Board released its final draft Bay-Delta Plan in August. The proposal is intended to address water quality and fish and wildlife conditions in the Sacramento River, its tributaries and the Delta while also considering water-supply reliability for communities and agriculture.

At the center of the proposal are two implementation pathways. The first is a regulatory pathway that would establish requirements for water rights not participating in the voluntary approach. The second is the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) pathway, which incorporates voluntary commitments involving both strategic river flows and habitat restoration. Both pathways would have regulatory effect if the plan is adopted.



A levee along the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The Healthy Rivers and Landscapes approach has been developed over several years through collaboration among water users, farmers, landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies. The proposal seeks to combine flow improvements with habitat restoration and other actions rather than relying on flow requirements alone. The State Water Board's proposal includes more than 27,000 acres of proposed aquatic habitat restoration and a framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. For California's agricultural water users, the stakes are significant. The Bay-Delta system is a critical component of the state's water supply, supporting both environmental resources and millions of acres of farmland. The final plan will establish a framework for how those competing demands are managed for years to come.

The State Water Board received written comments on the final draft through September 18 and is scheduled to consider adoption of the plan at a public meeting October 28–29. Interested parties will have an opportunity to provide oral comments at that meeting. The Family Farm Alliance will continue to follow the process closely, particularly given the significant involvement of Alliance members in California's water management and the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes discussions. The Bay-Delta debate illustrates a broader challenge facing Western water management: developing durable solutions that improve environmental outcomes while maintaining reliable water supplies for farms, communities and the broader economy.

Colorado River Enters a New Operating Era

The Colorado River entered a new operating era October 1, as the operating guidelines that governed the river through 2026 expired and the Basin moved into a new framework for managing an increasingly stressed system. That transition was a central topic at the Colorado River Symposium, held in Santa Fe, New Mexico at the end of September. The invitation-only gathering brought together water managers, scientists, academics, attorneys, federal agency representatives and other water leaders from throughout the Basin. With Reclamation's proposed post-2026 actions finalized just weeks earlier, the Symposium provided an opportunity to look beyond the immediate operating decisions and discuss what comes next.



The “bathtub ring” at Lake Powell shows how far the reservoir has dropped.

The near-term picture is challenging. After more than two decades of drought, both Lake Powell and Lake Mead have reached record-low elevations, with their combined storage at its lowest point since Lake Powell began filling in 1963. The 2025–26 winter also produced the lowest observed snowpack on record, further reducing runoff into the system. In August, the Department of the Interior finalized 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines and a broader 10-year Decision Framework extending through 2036. The framework was adopted after the seven Basin States were unable to reach consensus on a long-term operating agreement, though the federal

government continues to reiterate that it will accept and work with any plan the basin states agree to, if agreement is achievable.

For 2027 and 2028, Lower Basin water deliveries will be reduced by 1.25 million acre-feet annually. If the proposed state sharing arrangement is implemented in the lower basin, the reductions would be 760,000 acre-feet for Arizona, 440,000 for California and 50,000 for Nevada. Lower Basin users are also expected to voluntarily conserve and store at least 700,000 acre-feet over the two-year period. The framework provides additional flexibility for Upper Basin reservoir operations and establishes elevation triggers for additional action if conditions deteriorate.

The new framework provides an important measure of operational certainty, but it does not resolve the larger question facing the Basin: how will a river with less water reliably serve the people, farms, businesses and ecosystems that depend on it? That question will continue to drive negotiations, litigation and policy discussions throughout the Basin. The framework itself is designed to accommodate additional voluntary conservation, water storage, infrastructure investments and water-supply projects as conditions change and Basin parties continue negotiating.

Agriculture will be an important part of that conversation. The Colorado River supports approximately 5.5

million acres of farmland and agricultural communities throughout the West. Protecting that production capacity requires more than asking existing water users to continually absorb additional reductions. It requires investment in storage, conveyance, conservation, system efficiency and new water supplies while respecting existing water rights and the communities that have built their economies around them.

The challenges are already visible beyond the mainstem reservoirs. In southeastern Colorado, proposed municipal acquisitions of agricultural land and water have renewed concerns about the long-term effects of “buy and dry.” In the Gunnison Basin, historically low Blue Mesa Reservoir levels are forcing difficult decisions among storage, hydropower, recreation, environmental resources, and agriculture. These local conflicts illustrate the broader reality of operating a river system under prolonged scarcity: every decision has consequences somewhere else in the Basin.

The Family Farm Alliance will continue to make sure agriculture is part of those conversations. As the Basin moves into this new operating era, our focus will remain on protecting the ability of farmers and ranchers to produce food, defending the value of existing water rights and advancing practical solutions that increase the amount and reliability of water available to the system. That means supporting conservation and efficiency, but also storage, conveyance, water reuse, augmentation, infrastructure modernization and other tools that can expand and better manage available supplies. It also means keeping agricultural producers at the table as the Basin develops the next generation of operating rules.

The Colorado River has entered a new chapter. The work now is to make sure agriculture has a meaningful role in writing what comes next.

Growing the Pie: Innovation for the Next 100 Years

The challenges facing Western irrigated agriculture are getting bigger. Across the West, farmers, ranchers and water managers are dealing with historic drought, changing hydrology, aging infrastructure, rising costs, regulatory uncertainty and growing competition for limited water supplies. The conversations we had in Washington, D.C., last month made one thing clear: these challenges cannot be solved by simply deciding who gets a larger piece of a shrinking pie.

We need to grow the pie. That is the focus of this year’s Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference, “Growing the Pie: Innovation for the Next 100 Years,” October 28–30 at the Silver Legacy in Reno, Nevada. The conference will bring together producers, irrigation and water managers, policymakers, federal officials, technical experts and others from across the 17 Western states to look beyond the immediate fights over water and focus on solutions that can increase reliability and strengthen the systems agriculture depends on.

That means talking about the full toolbox: new storage, conveyance and system modernization, groundwater recharge, water recycling, desalination, conservation, precision irrigation, canal automation and emerging technologies that can help produce more with less. It also means asking how we finance these investments and how we can get good projects built faster.

The conference will pick up directly where our Annual Farmer Lobbyist Trip left off. In Washington, more than 30 farmers, ranchers and irrigation managers explained the realities facing their operations and communities to

Members of Congress, Congressional staff and federal agencies. At the conference, we will bring those conversations home and dig deeper into what can actually be done.

One of the conference's most important opportunities will be a four-hour joint workshop with the Bureau of Reclamation on October 28. The workshop will bring Reclamation leadership and water-user contractors together to advance the Reclamation Realignment Initiative and its connection to the

Department of the Interior's Secretarial Order 3446 and its goals for more efficient project delivery. This will be a working session—not simply another panel. Reclamation staff and water users will work together to identify what is working, where project delivery is unnecessarily delayed, and what changes could improve communication, decision-making, financial transparency, and implementation. Participants will work in mixed groups to identify practical recommendations and determine which improvements can happen administratively and which may require longer-term policy changes. The goal is to leave the room with concrete next steps for continued collaboration.

That approach reflects something the Alliance has emphasized throughout the year: local water managers need to be at the table when decisions are being made about the systems they operate. Strong federal partnerships remain essential, but those partnerships work best when communication runs both ways and the people responsible for delivering water have a meaningful role in shaping the process.

The rest of the conference will continue that conversation. Sessions will examine the outlook from Washington, Reclamation priorities, innovative approaches to financing water infrastructure, new water supplies, technology, collaboration across interests and how we turn promising ideas into projects on the ground. Western agriculture does not have the luxury of waiting for the water crisis to solve itself. We need to build, modernize, conserve, innovate and find new supplies—and we need to do it together. That is what “Growing the Pie” is about.

We hope you will join us in Reno. Registration is open, and space is filling—sign up soon and be part of the conversation about what comes next for Western irrigated agriculture.



***Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference, October 28–30,
Silver Legacy Resort, Reno.***

Registration Is Open



October 28–30, 2026 • Silver Legacy Resort Casino • Reno, Nevada

Register online: familyfarmalliance.org/2026conf

Full conference details: familyfarmalliance.org/events

Questions? Contact Executive Director Samantha Barncastle at samantha@familyfarmalliance.org or (575) 202-2705.

CORRESPONDENCE LIST
OCTOBER 2026

1. September 11, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Regular Board Meeting on September 16, 2026.
2. September 15, 2026 – District sent Backflow Testing Requirement Letters to seven customers.
3. September 16, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District Regular Board Meeting on September 21, 2026.
4. September 18, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Community Interface Committee Meeting on September 21, 2026.
5. September 21, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Regular Board Meeting on September 24, 2026.
6. September 24, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board Regular Board Meeting on September 28, 2026.
7. October 1, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Operating Committee Meeting on October 8, 2026.
8. October 1, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Wastewater Committee Meeting on October 6, 2026.
9. October 1, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Finance Committee Meeting on October 6, 2026.
10. October 6, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Special Board Meeting on October 7, 2026.
11. October 11, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Los Olivos Community Services District Project Management Subcommittee Meeting on October 14, 2026.
12. October 12, 2026 – District received the Cancellation Notice for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Citizen Advisory Group Meeting on October 15, 2026.
13. October 12, 2026 – District received a Public Records Act Request from Justin Wenig from Starbridge.
14. October 15, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Operating Committee Special Meeting on October 21, 2026.
15. October 15, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Regular Board Meeting on October 22, 2026.