



(SPRING 2016)

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An informational newsletter for water users and landowners in the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors' service area.

EXCHANGE perspective

June 2016

Despite allocation announcement, officials remain cautious for supply

An announcement that the San Joaquin River Exchange and Settlement Contractors would receive 100 percent of their contract supply this year was welcome news, but local officials are still keeping a wary eye on water conditions.

"The April 1 announcement of a 100 percent delivery from Reclamation represented acknowledgment of a temperature control plan for the Sacramento River that accommodated winter run salmon," explained Steve Chedester, Executive Director of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority. "There are still a lot of factors that impact water to the CVP deliveries and when they will occur."

Authority forms local groundwater agency

Plans are moving forward to adopt a new groundwater plan for local lands under the authority of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

A 2014 state law mandated the formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) that would develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan that would establish a sustainable approach to each groundwater basin or subbasin in the state.

The Authority submitted an application to the Department of Water Resources to form a GSA covering the land within the boundaries of its four member units. The application was subject to a "protest" by other groups (County,

Planting season that began earlier this year coincides with Delta pumping restrictions designed to protect the Delta smelt.

The Biological Opinion that protects the smelt calls for reduced pumping from the Delta when the smelt are threatened.



The Biological Opinion that protects salmon and steelhead in the San Joaquin River basin also affects water deliveries during the months of April and May.

"We've experienced ratcheting down of the Delta pumps during the past couple of months but we anticipate the pumps to be fully operational in July, August and into September, which will help clarify operations for south of the Delta contractors," Chedester said.

Winter storms that replenished reservoir levels in the north state and deposited snow in the mountains brightened the water supply outlook but the periodic storms that followed were warmer and caused part of the snowpack to melt as runoff.

"A substantial portion of the rain driven runoff did not go to supply water users but instead went to the Pacific Ocean because of regulations," explained Chedester. "Our water supplies have become subject to increasing regulations, which causes us to continue our monitoring of the various

Increased farm reporting for drainage pending

Farmers in the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition must wait to learn whether new reporting requirements by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) will lead to expanded data collection.

Among the proposed new requirements included in a draft order issued earlier this year by the SWRCB staff are:

1. Expanding nitrogen management plans developed by farmers to also include an irrigation component.
2. Elimination of the High and Low Vulnerability distinctions used to tailor growers' reporting requirements to actual water quality risks.
3. Reporting grower data on a field by field basis directly to a publically accessible state run website.
4. Adding water quality sampling and reporting requirements for domestic wells serving residences located on farms.

"The proposed order is overreaching in its collection of data required by farmers," commented David Cory, water quality consultant to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Authority and whose family owns land in the Central California Irrigation District.

"For the past 10 years the Westside Coalition and others throughout the state have been successfully addressing

Sansoni reflects on changes in water industry after serving 43 years

Aldo Sansoni has witnessed a tremendous amount of change in the water industry during his 43 years of service on the San Luis Canal Company's board of directors and



Aldo Sansoni

now that he has decided to step down from that board, he firmly believes that more changes are needed.

"Farmers have been in the mainstream of change as it relates to water," says Sansoni. "We've come a long way from simply opening the head gates and letting

the water flow to the drip irrigation systems that are in use today.

"I firmly believe that there is enough water in California to fulfill everyone's needs but it has to be managed differently."

surface water quality issues in the Central Valley," he added. "The SWRCB should not make changes to the groundwater related elements of the existing program until coalitions have had a chance to implement the current requirements."

After two hearings to accept testimony on the draft order, the SWRCB is now considering whether to make changes to the proposed order before it considers it for adoption.

SWRCB Chair Felicia Marcus stated at the beginning of the May 4 hearing in Sacramento that it is "likely" a revised order will be issued once all the public comments have been received by the June 1 deadline.

Cory stated that repeated petitions by environmental interest groups have sought increased grower reporting.

"Farmers are finding themselves in a new era of reporting and complying with state regulations and laws as it comes to water quality," said Cory.

Estimates submitted by several water quality coalitions during the Sacramento hearing indicated that membership costs to farmers could rise by \$5 per acre in order to cover the increased reporting requirements.

Cory declined to predict when the SWRCB would issue a ruling or a revised order, only to say, "it could be months before this is resolved."

Part of that change in management must take place in moving water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, according to Sansoni.

"There has to be a better understanding between Delta interests and those interests south of the Delta as it relates to water," he added. "We have to put our minds together and come up with a resolution on how to move that water through the Delta.

"I think the young people who are coming up in agriculture will be more open to change; and that's good."

"Aldo did a tremendous job in representing the shareholders over the years who elected him to the board," said Chase Hurley, SLCC general manager. "When he spoke, whether in the community or at our board meetings, people always listened."

Future plans for Sansoni calls for a continuance with his farming efforts, including brokering hay, and "spending more time with family."

Los Banos Creek Project gains momentum

More water should be available to local farmers as a result of plans moving forward to complete the Los Banos Creek Project, according to Chris White, general manager of the Central California Irrigation District (CCID).



Water flowed through the Los Banos Creek Project site earlier this year

That increase in water will result from the local proposal to re-operate Los Banos Creek Detention Dam that will among other things provide groundwater replenishment of the aquifer as increased flows travel along the creek.

Participants in the Los Banos Creek Project include: San Luis Water District, Grasslands Water District and the City of Los Banos, along with CCID and the other Exchange Contract Entities. The Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources will also be partnering in the reoperation process.

Water supply...

Continued from Page 1

factors that affect our supplies.”

Part of that monitoring is looking forward to future water years. Chedester noted that some forecasts that are described as “very early” are already predicting a continuation of drought effects.

“The storms that swept through the state this past winter got many people excited about the drought coming to an end,” he said. “But we knew that it would take more than one year of heavy rains to bring us out of a drought situation.

“Whether these early forecasts of a water-short year in 2017 comes true or not, we must continually be preparing for all situations,” he concluded.

“We think it is a good project,” said White, “with benefits in both water supply and groundwater recharge. It has the potential to provide a new supply of water to local farmers in the participating districts.”

White explained that when dry conditions exist such as the recent drought years, water stored behind the Detention Dam could be available for distribution.

“This increase in available storage could help our farmers get through tight spots when other supplies are limited,” he said.

The dam has a capacity of 31,000 acre-feet that includes conservation space above 20,600 AF. Coordinated efforts between Reclamation and DWR could result in flood control waters being stored in the dam and available for later distribution.

“We are working with Reclamation to make sure that the integrity of the Detention Dam’s structure will hold the additional water,” White added. “The potential also exists that water behind the dam could be held as carryover supply.”

White noted that bids are now being accepted for a planned 90-day construction of facilities for diverting the water from Los Banos Creek and in and out of the San Luis Canal. He expects construction to be completed by October. This is a project that will have an immediate benefit by allowing the diversion of Los Banos Creek flows even before any re-operation of the Detention Dam are implemented.

Groundwater agency...

Continued from Page 1

districts, cities, etc.) that would overlap the proposed GSA. The deadline expired for those “protests” and the Authority may now move forward.

“We are now the exclusive GSA for the lands within the Exchange Contractors boundary and we are moving forward,” said Steve Chedester, executive director of the Authority.

“There is a hard deadline for approving a GSP by January 2020 and we are not going to wait in developing a plan. We will begin meeting immediately with the seven municipalities adjacent to our boundary to coordinate how to best develop the plan.”

Chedester explained that the Authority’s GSA will also coordinate with nearby GSAs as they form for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding to assure no negative impacts from eventual plans.



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Authority challenges SWRCB action

*By Steve Chedester
Executive Director*

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority and others challenged the State Water Resources Control Board's legal authority in extending its Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) on December 15, 2015. This action, which neither the CVP or DWR applied for, was designed to allow the Executive Director of the SWRCB to order operations of the water projects in 2016 without evidentiary hearings.

The TUCP attempted to order that Shasta storage not be less than 1,600,000 acre feet in the fall of 2016 for "temperature" purposes, thus removing use of up to 1,600,000 acre feet of storage from water operations in dry periods.

Our two basic claims were (1) that no agenda item had been posted announcing the proposed unilateral extension of the CVP and SWP TUCP by the SWRCB; and, (2) that no adjudicative hearing had been announced or placed on a meeting agenda to consider changes in the terms of the CVP water rights for Shasta Reservoir storage amounts, Folsom Reservoir storage amounts,



SJRECWA files court challenge to SWRCB's process in extending Temporary Urgency Change Petition that reduces storage space behind Shasta Dam.

or temperature requirements for water released from Shasta Reservoir, and the changes in those water right permits require an evidentiary hearing.

To date, the Sacramento Superior court has not set the case for a hearing.