



Sups: Without storage, no on bond

Board says more water storage needed to protect agriculture

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The issue of putting a bond measure before state voters has been a critical topic for the last several years for the county Board of Supervisors in its effort to make sure the Valley, and especially Tulare County, where the much of the nation's food is grown, has enough quality water to support it.

One of the biggest contentions for the board now is a lack of water storage the current proposal does not address.

“Leaving out storage is doing nothing to help with California's water,” said board chairman Pete Vander Poel.



Recorder File Photo by Reneh Agha
Water is being pumped for irrigation at an orchard at Avenue 152 and Road 208 Wednesday. So far this year's rainfall amounts to just 3.43 inches.

The original bond measure, totaling \$11.4 billion, was approved in 2009 for the November 2010 ballot, however, it was amended then postponed to November 2012. It was then determined the bond needed to be reduced to cut costs, and last year no agreement could be made on how to do that. Polls also indicated voters would not support the bond, it was again postponed, this time to the November 2014 ballot.

Although several agencies have organized water bond packages for the 2014 ballot, according to the supervisors, the one that most aligns with Tulare County's goals is the proposal from the Association of California Water Agencies. This proposal totals \$8.2 billion and addresses the elements of local resource development, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta ecosystem restoration, watershed protection and surface water storage.

In an effort to express the needs of Tulare County, supervisors have drafted a letter of explaining their position.

“The proposed funding allocation for the development of surface water storage and supply, and for the improvement of water quality are insufficient for the maintenance and preservation of agriculture, the number one industry in California,” the letter states.

The letter stresses the importance of having more water storage, not just better water quality.

“Additional surface water storage, both north and south of the Delta, are crucial for assurance of an adequate water supply, flood protection, cold water for fish, and efficient and successful groundwater storage projects. Storage projects such as the enlargement of the Shasta Dam, Temperance Flat and Sites Reservoirs would assist in regional conjunctive use projects and provide multi-benefits to residents, growers, Delta levees and the environment.”

The board discussed the federal National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, stating the county would not have access to the water under current conditions.

“The continued over-drafted groundwater basins of the Central Valley are also a very serious threat to the economic future of California agriculture, and the Central Valley is in dire need of the development and importation of more surface water to eliminate mining groundwater. The legislature should revisit Wild and Scenic Rivers status of the North Coast waters, where nearly one-third of California’s water supply flows to the ocean, when there is such a demonstrated need to put available resources to their highest and best use.”

The letter finished with this ominous statement: “Without sufficient water storage in the water bond measure, we will not support the water bond.”

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<http://www.recorderonline.com/articles/bond-57805-county-critical.html>