



NCWA Week in Review

April 11, 2016

Coalition of Environmentalist, Fishing Groups Urge State Water Board to Act on Water Quality

Last week, a large coalition of conservation, fishing, recreational, and tribal organizations sent letters to the State Water Resources Control Board and to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, urging completion of the Bay Delta's water quality control plan by the end of 2017, and asking the feds to step in should the state fail to do so.

Signatories to the letters include, AquAlliance, the Bay Institute, CSPA, C-WIN, Clean Water Action, Environmental Water Caucus, Friends of the SF Estuary, Environment Now, Friends of the River, NRDC, the Nature Conservancy, Planning and Conservation League, Restore the Delta, and Trout Unlimited, as well as numerous tribes, fishermen's associations, and conservation organizations.

The letter points out that the State Water Board is required under federal and state law to review the Bay-Delta's water quality control plan every three years, yet despite worsening conditions, the State Water Board has not updated the water quality standards for the Bay-Delta since 1995.

Sacramento Valley Submits Comments on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) and Regional Water Authority (RWA), along with many urban and rural Sacramento Valley entities, submitted [comments on the draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations](#). The NCWA/RWA letter urged the Department of Water Resources (DWR) "to take a step back in the process" to provide a cogent regulatory framework that will help local agencies succeed with their plans. The letter urged DWR to recognize the unique dynamic in the Sacramento Valley: no critically over-drafted basins and conjunctive use that has been instrumental to achieving "sustainable groundwater management" in the Sacramento Valley when considering the next version of the regulations.

Citing the importance of "substantial compliance" as the key to successful Sustainable Groundwater Management, the letter pressed DWR to eliminate sections of the draft regulations which are too prescriptive and appear structured to uniformly manage groundwater basins with a "top down" state level (one-plan per basin), instead of at the local level, which is necessary in the Sacramento Valley to successfully manage groundwater.

At the California Water Commission's April 20 meeting, DWR will provide an [update on the Draft GSP Regulations](#) and the Final Draft GSP Regulations.

Ballot Measure Draws Concern

Twenty organizations, ranging from the California Professional Firefighters to NCWA, sent the Chairman of the California Republican Party and former Senate President, Jim Brulte, a joint signature letter opposing the “Cortopassi Ballot Measure.” The signatories to the letter urged the Republican Party to “not be fooled by proponents’ claims that this measure is about ‘good government,’ or ‘closing a loophole,’ or ‘reducing debt.’” The letter went on to state, “the measure has far broader implications that would actually undercut key Republican principles,” and would “erode local voter control, arm anti-growth activists and self-interested NIMBYs with a new litigation tool to stop economic development.

The NCWA Board has opposed this measure as it could add another layer of approval for Sites Reservoir and other infrastructure.

NCWA Welcomes New Administrative Assistant

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) is pleased to welcome Jessica Ridgley to the NCWA team as our new Administrative Assistant replacing Danyella Herrera. Jessica is a graduate of Occidental College in Southern California, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Her family has been involved with Northern California agriculture in various ways, including farming operations in the Red Bluff area. Jessica has a passion for horses and she has experience in the equestrian environment, including support for marketing, online publications and event management. She lives in Davis. Jessica’s e-mail is jridgley@norcalwater.org and phone is 916.442.8333.

From the Washington Desk: House/Senate Set to Move FY 2017 Energy and Water Bills

As reported in the Ferguson Group’s weekly update:

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans will hold a hearing on Wednesday that will examine regulatory and administrative reforms “empowering” states and Western water users to make decisions. Recent hearings on Western water have centered on a long-running dispute among environmentalists, farmers and cities in California that has intensified with the drought.

Also on Wednesday, the House Energy and Water (E&W) Development Appropriations Subcommittee will mark up its FY 2017 Energy and Water Development spending bill, while the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee also will take up its version of the bill. The E&W spending bill over the past several years has become more and more controversial, dealing with policy riders on prohibiting funding for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste disposal in Nevada and stopping the implementation of the contentious “waters of the US” (WOTUS) rule, as well as how much funding should be split between traditional and renewable energy programs at DOE.

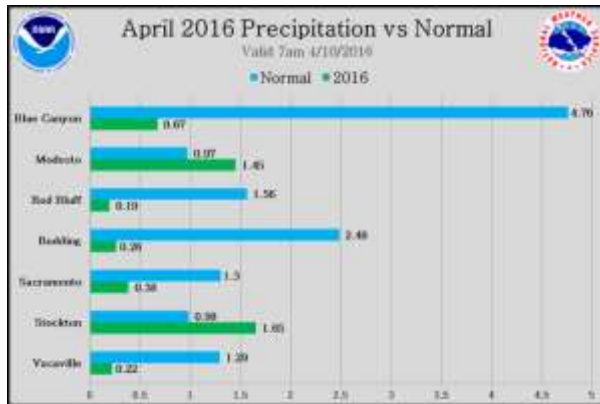
Even though Subcommittee leaders want to move a bill as quickly as possible, we expect these controversial riders will continue to be a challenge for the E&W Subcommittees due to some Members’ election year posturing.

Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has stated that the Senate will focus on appropriations bills over the next 3-month period. Generally, the House moves spending bills first, House GOP leaders have been struggling to pass a budget that would set spending limits for FY 2017. House conservatives want to either reduce overall discretionary spending levels below the top line set last year in a bipartisan budget deal (\$1.07 trillion) or pay for some of the spending with cuts from other mandatory programs (e.g. Medicare). Senate leaders, however, are determined not to wait for the House and are set to announce their FY 2017 spending allocations at the previously agreed to \$1.07 trillion cap.

(Week in Review, con’t Page 3)

Water Supply Shapes Up for Year

April showers evidently bring more than May flowers. This past weekend saw copious amounts of rains



in areas: Modesto and Stockton, (see bar chart) which to date have recorded below average precipitation, adding to an already promising water year. As detailed in NCWA's blog [2016 Water Supplies Shaping Up](#), "Northern California has been blessed this year with generally full reservoirs and good snowpack in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade. This has led to full water allocations throughout the Sacramento Valley, which has been welcomed by cities and rural communities, farmers, refuge managers, and fish—all of which have suffered in different ways from [reduced supplies](#) during the

past several years. In addition to benefitting all these beneficial purposes, the availability of surface supplies this water will also help rest and [recharge the groundwater aquifers](#) that have been heavily relied upon for the past several years."

"Opportunity lost, like water over a dam"- Chico Enterprise Record

The April 4 [Chico Enterprise-Record editorial](#) summed up the complexities of water managed succinctly and the need to update the system when it stated in part,

"Seeing water pour over the spillway at Oroville Dam for the first time in many years was a sight for sore eyes. Locally, we knew that meant Lake Oroville was rising, bringing all the good that comes with that.

Unfortunately the rest of the state saw the water flowing down the spillway too, and the visual is getting quite a different interpretation elsewhere: Drought's over. Back to normal.

Well, no, that's not what that means. But it's pretty much impossible to get anyone to hear what was actually happening against the backdrop of the water gushing down the spillway. Even here we heard local news broadcasters announce "the lakes are full."

No, they're not. Even now Lake Oroville's just 87 percent full, Shasta Lake, 89 percent. The water's actually being released to keep them from being full, just in case a monster storm surprises us with a deluge that would overtop the dams.

That points out the incredible complexity of the state's water system. It's not just about water supply, but also flood control. Most people are unable to distinguish between the two. Dump water to allow for a flood, and it's seen as a sign there's an overabundance of water in storage.

It also shows how much of an update the system needs. The flooding protocols requiring empty space in the lakes date back to the '80s, when a sneaker storm pushed Folsom Dam to the edge. But since then weather forecasting has improved to the point we'd see such a monster storm coming from a long way off. But we still use the old policy.

The water system was constructed before the state and federal endangered species acts were passed in the early '70s. Since then, operational changes have been made to accommodate the law, but very few infrastructure changes."

(Week in Review, con't Page 4)

Silver Anniversary of California Water Policy Conference



Sunset in the Sacramento Delta

Photo: Suchi187

This year's theme, appropriately titled, *Silver Anniversary No Silver Bullet*, will be held for the first time at the UC Davis Conference Center on April 20 & 21, 2016. For more information about speakers and to register visit the [California Water Policy Conference website](http://www.waterpolicyconference.org).

For a daily compilation of all the news shaping California water policy visit Aquaforia.

<http://aquaforia.com>