

# ***FYI: The following is information about a proposed California water bond*** **State Water Supply Infrastructure, Water Storage and Conveyance, Ecosystem and Watershed Protection and Restoration, and Drinking Water Protection Act of 2018**

*Proponent(s): Dr. Gerald Meral*

*Submitted for Title and Summary: July 14, 2017*

California's recent drought was broken in 2017 by historic rainfall. YTD there has been in excess of 2MM acre feet of water released from Friant Dam to the ocean. Friant Dam was recently releasing water to the river while the Friant Kern Canal was under prorated because subsidence has rendered the canal incapable of delivering water to its design capacity. In certain reaches of the canal the design capacity was 4,000 CFS and is now limited to 1,600 CFS.

Furthermore, the primary reason for the drop in the groundwater table and the subsidence throughout the San Joaquin Valley has been the reduction in water conveyed through the Delta, which has been getting progressively worse due to increasing regulatory and environmental constraints over the past 20 years. Also, in 2014 and 2015, the Delta deliveries were so low that the United States decided to send almost all Friant water to the Exchange Contractors, leaving no surface water for Friant Contractors. This caused a significant drop in the groundwater table and a 2+ foot drop in the ground surface over the past year in the Friant area and along parts of the Friant-Kern Canal. Many of the local communities in and near the Friant area rely on groundwater only and their wells went dry leaving them with no water at all.

To make matters worse, the ground subsidence has reduced the capacity of the Friant-Kern Canal by 60% in some areas, making it impossible to use wet year water to recharge the aquifers. These problems will likely worsen, which is why it is critical to include the Friant language in the initiative (see below).

*By way of background, Dr. Meral the bond's lead developer, served as deputy director of the California Department of Water Resources from 1975 to 1983 under Governor Brown. Bond language has been filed, totaling \$8.9B. The following language is in the text of the bond proposal to provide a direct benefit to the Friant Division of the Central Valley Project:*

## **Chapter 10. Improved Water Conveyance and Water Conservation. (Meral Final 2017-08-21)**

**86126.** Even though the drought has eased, the effects of the drought are still being felt in many areas throughout the state, including the San Joaquin Valley. Further exacerbating the impact of drought conditions on water users were legal requirements restricting pumping from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. One of the consequences of both the drought and pumping restrictions was a significant increase in groundwater pumping as a means to replace reduced surface supplies. Such increase in groundwater pumping lowers groundwater tables, which in turn causes wells to go dry and land to subside, which has particularly been the case on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. The Friant-Kern Canal has lost 60% of its capacity to convey water for both consumptive uses and groundwater recharge. Unless conveyance capacity is restored and increased, the subsidence will continue to get worse and those local communities, including disadvantaged communities, who largely rely on groundwater to serve their citizens, will continue to suffer adverse effects. Significant public benefits will result from this state investment, including avoiding increased unemployment, stabilization of groundwater, and securing a more stable food supply for California.

**86127.** The sum of seven hundred fifty million dollars (\$750,000,000) is appropriated from the Fund to the department for a grant to the Friant Water Authority for water conveyance capital improvements, including restored and increased conveyance capacity to and in the Madera and Friant-Kern canals, resulting in greater groundwater recharge, improved conveyance and utilization of floodwaters, and for water conservation. Improvements with funds provided by this paragraph shall be completed consistent with applicable state and federal laws and contracts.

**86128.** The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the Fund to the Natural Resources Agency for actions that support projects defined in paragraph 11 in the settlement agreement to restore the San Joaquin River referenced in Section 2080.2 of the Fish and Game Code. Before expenditure may occur, formal concurrence on specific projects to be undertaken is required by the settling parties to the agreement."

It is estimated if the Friant Division had to fund this corrective action on its own it would add an additional \$25 per acre foot to the cost of water per year for the next 30 years.

## Other benefits provided in the bond measure that relate to the Central Valley currently include:

**Safe drinking water and wastewater treatment for disadvantaged communities. \$750 million.** These funds would provide safe drinking water and wastewater treatment for disadvantaged communities, especially in the Central Valley.

**Groundwater. \$675 million.** These funds will go to implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Strongly supported by agencies and farmers in areas developing groundwater laws under SGMA.

**Oroville Dam Spillway Repair. \$200 million.** Strong support from State Water Project Contractors. Proponents must raise \$2MM to gather signatures to qualify the Bond for the 2018 ballot. In addition after the Bond qualifies for the ballot additional money will be necessary to mount a campaign to ensure the Bond's passage.

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*These following categories of funding and other aspects of the water bond has been provided courtesy of Dr. Jerry Meral as of August 21, 2017. For each category there is an explanation of the category, why it is needed, and who would support inclusion of this funding. In each category, there will be few or no state funds available from Proposition 1 or any other source by 2019.*

**Safe drinking water and wastewater treatment for disadvantaged communities. \$750 million.** These funds would provide safe drinking water and wastewater treatment for disadvantaged communities, especially in the Central Valley. The environmental justice community and agriculture support this category.

**Wastewater recycling. \$400 million.** This benefits primarily urban areas. Supported by urban water agencies and conservation groups statewide.

**Groundwater desalination. \$400 million.** There are virtually no state funds for this water source, which is most important in urban areas. Strong supported by many urban water agencies.

**Urban water conservation. \$300 million.** Benefits urban water agencies. Highly cost effective. Strong support from urban water agencies and conservation groups.

**Agricultural water conservation. \$50 million.** This will help improve flows into the Delta by conserving water in agricultural practices and distribution systems in Delta tributaries. Central valley flood management, including flood plain restoration. \$100 million. Strongly supported by Central Valley Flood Board and conservation groups. Additional \$50 million for retrofit of a reservoir (probably Bullard's Bar) for better flood management.

**San Francisco Bay Wetlands and flood improvements. \$200 million.** Improves wetlands in San Francisco Bay to provide flood protection and mitigate sea level rise. Very high priority for Silicon Valley Leadership Group and conservation groups in Bay Area.

**Data management. \$60 million.** Better data collection and management: streamflow, etc. High priority for Bay Area Council and Silicon Valley Leadership Group. Funds go to SWRCB and DWR.

**Stormwater management \$600 million for a variety of state agencies.** This responds to new stormwater management requirements by the regional water quality control board. This is a huge priority for businesses, cities and labor, especially in Southern California.

**Watershed Improvement \$2355 million to a wide variety of state agencies.** Pays for better management of watersheds throughout the state to improve water quality and water supply. This is the most important category for conservation groups throughout the state. It includes \$150 million for the Los Angeles River, a top priority for the Speaker of the Assembly and President Pro Tem of the Senate, as well as \$100 million for the Delta Conservancy, which helps

fund the governor's Eco-Restore program. It also includes \$80 million for the removal of Matilija Dam, a silted-in dam in Ventura County, a conservationist top priority. \$200 million is included for ecological restoration and dust control at the Salton Sea. Watershed restoration after fires in the Sierra Nevada and elsewhere receives \$100 million.

**Land Management for Water Yield. \$100 million.** This pays for removal of invasive weeds which use excessive amounts of surface and groundwater such as tamarisk, yellow starthistle, and Arundo. Estimates of water savings are in excess of one million acre feet per year.

**Fisheries restoration. \$400 million.** These funds go to restoring fish habitat. This is critical to demonstrating to the SWRCB that habitat is a useful way to bring back fish without requiring excessive instream flows. This category is strongly supported by fish groups, and by those impacted by changes to the Bay-Delta plan, such as water agencies on tributaries to the Delta.

**Groundwater. \$675 million.** These funds will go to implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Strongly supported by agencies and farmers in areas developing groundwater plans under SGMA.

**Water and specific habitat improvements for fisheries. \$500 million.** Similar to fisheries restoration category, only more specific. High priority for fish groups, and water agencies affected by By-Delta plan.

**Completion of fish screens in Central Valley. \$100 million.** High priority for fish groups, and water agencies affected by Bay-Delta plan.

**San Joaquin River fisheries Restoration. \$100 million.** Restoration of Spring Run Chinook Salmon downstream of Friant dam.

**Waterfowl habitat. \$280 million.** Very important to waterfowl groups, and water agencies with waterfowl obligations under the Central Valley Project Improvement Act.

**Bay Area Regional Reliability. \$250 million.** Top priority of all the major water suppliers in the Bay Area. Interconnections between Bay Area water agencies.

**Improvement to Friant Kern Canal and other Friant water interconnections. \$750 million.** Restores lost capacity to Friant Kern Canal, pays for groundwater recharge programs, water conservation and possibly new water conveyance in the Friant area.

**Oroville Dam Spillway Repair. \$200 million.** Justified due to original federal investment in flood control at Oroville. Strong support from State Water Project Contractors.

*The initiative also allows state and federal water contractors to recover the funds they pay in charges due to implementation of AB 32, and use those funds in their own systems for water and energy conservation. This will redirect at least \$50 million a year to water related projects.*