

Waterlines

FEBRUARY 2006

The Top California Water Stories of the Month as Compiled by Orange County Water District

Contra Costa Times 2-1-06 – The latest state water plan, three years overdue, by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) maps out ways to increase water supplies to meet demand. The new plan relies less on building new reservoirs and emphasizes alternatives such as more efficient use of water, underground storage, recycling and desalination. “We have enough water to meet our needs through 2030, but it’s going to require good investment decisions,” said Kamyar Guivetchi, statewide water planning manager for the DWR.

Stockton Record 2-3-06 – Kiss goodbye that \$3-per-month water fee Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had proposed to help shore up state levees. The senator in charge of overseeing the multibillion-dollar water works proposal axed the fee proposal. While the fee – some call it a tax – still lives in the Assembly, it appears doomed for the short term. The governor had proposed to charge every household \$3 per month to pay for improvements to the state’s water system, including maintaining the levees in the Delta.

San Diego Union 2-10-06 – Seven Western states have sent the U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton a plan listing a range of unprecedented strategies to stretch Colorado River supplies, including banking more California water in Lake Mead behind Hoover Dam in Nevada. The Colorado management plan would also extend a deadline that requires California to quit siphoning more than its share of water from 2015 to 2025, if water is available. Other components include operating Lake Mead and Lake Powell cooperatively, cloud seeding, desalination, idling farmland, water trading between states, water delivery cuts and a modest-sized new reservoir in the Imperial Valley that would be financed by Nevada. The dry spell broke last year with a normal snow pack across the West. However, the Colorado River basin remains squeezed. Lake Mead is at only 58 percent of capacity; Lake Powell is less than half.

Stockton Record 2-10-06 – State water officials botched a water rights decision six years ago that granted water exporters the right to use each other’s pumps to keep California Delta water healthy, a state appeals court has ruled. Plaintiffs in the case, which included several local water agencies and environmental groups, had argued the state water board’s decision in 2000 to allow exporters to coordinate their water releases prevented

enough water to be sent down the San Joaquin River to support salmon runs and dilute high salt levels in the Delta.

Inside the Bay Area 2-15-06 – Governor Schwarzenegger is campaigning for water-related aspects of his \$222 billion public works proposal that could resurrect a decades-old battle over a canal skirting the Bay Area Delta – a plan voters overwhelmingly rejected amid fears it would drain Northern California to quench the thirst of the south state. The governor’s Strategic Growth Plan does not specifically propose a new Peripheral Canal, but administration officials said that as part of the effort, they are eyeing the ailing Delta and a combination of remedies that include a smaller canal to divert river water around the east side of the region.

North County Times 2-15-06 – Metropolitan Water District board members voted to hire their longtime lead attorney – 46-year old Jeff Kightlinger – to become the 13th general manager and chief operating officer in the agency’s 78-year-history.

Houston Chronicle 2-16-06 – Five environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the federal government saying it has failed to protect endangered fish in the Colorado River. Because the Interior Department failed to provide a more natural environment in the river, the humpback chub, razorback sucker, Colorado pikeminnow and bonytail chub are in danger of extinction, the suit alleges.

Contra Costa Times 2-25-06 – Governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency for fragile Sacramento River and Delta levees, freeing up at least \$75 million and suspending state environmental and contracting laws to speed repair at two eroded sites. “We are literally one quake or one major storm away from a major Katrina-like disaster,” the governor said.

North County Times 2-27-06 – Frustrated members of Congress vented their anger at efforts to save California’s most crucial water source, saying millions of dollars have been spent to study problems in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta with little to show for it. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, chairman of the House Resources Committee and a critic of the federal Endangered Species Act, called the hearing to focus attention of the decline of four key delta fish species. The plight of the fish has raised concerns that the overall health of the vast estuary is being jeopardized by pesticides, agricultural pumping, invasive species and other problems.

Waterlines is a monthly e-mail news summary prepared by the Orange County Water District (OCWD) to keep you abreast of this changing water environment. Attached is a summary of statewide news reports on key water issues. As the manager of the groundwater basin that supplies 60 percent of Orange County’s water supply, OCWD provides this handy, condensed news report to save you time while still keeping you abreast of water news that affects Orange County. We hope this will help you in the performance of your duties by keeping you up-to-date on key water stories affecting your organization and your constituents. If you have any questions, or know anyone who would like to receive this update, please contact Lisa Sanchez at (714) 378-3323 or lisasanchez@ocwd.com.