



Statewide Coalition Says Governor's Water Bond Will Worsen State's Water Crisis

August 13, 2008 -- A coalition of environmental, fishing and community organizations yesterday launched a statewide campaign opposing Gov. Schwarzenegger and Sen. Feinstein's push for a November water bond.

In simultaneous press conferences in Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Visalia, campaign organizers spoke out against the \$9.3 billion bond, saying it will worsen California's water crisis while plunging the state deeper into debt.

Coalition members also declared that instead of supporting the bond, state legislators should immediately distribute millions of dollars in unspent funds from a water bond passed in 2006.

"The Governor presents this bond as a forward-thinking, comprehensive solution, but in reality it's the same old thing -- another version of past proposals to build more dams, put in a peripheral canal and bail out corporate agribusiness," said Dorothy Green, of the California Water Impact Network. "California has to put its own house in order before asking us to support another bond."

billions of dollars on outdated technologies," said Conner Everts, chair of the Southern California Watershed Alliance. He pointed out that groundwater basins can hold 6 to 10 times more water than dams do, at a fraction of the cost. Everts explained that regional underground basins can meet nearly all storage and supply needs -- if the state will ensure that groundwater is not over-pumped and contaminated basins are cleaned up.



Surrounded by students of Agua University and others opposed to the proposed water bond, Mindy McIntyre of the Planning and Conservation League explains that much-needed water policy reform must come before a 9.2 billion dollar water bond.



Dorothy Green of California Water Impact Network speaks out against the proposed water bond at the Santa Monica Pier.

"Instead of committing to a cost-effective statewide water conservation plan modeled on the advances pioneered in Southern California, this plan wastes

California's drought has not only drastically reduced the state's water supply, it has exacerbated other problems, from lack of safe drinking water for rural and other disadvantaged communities to the collapse of the Delta ecosystem. Instead of creating new management solutions, the coalition says the bond would fund the same kinds of projects that have already pushed California's water system to the brink.

"This year's closure of the pacific salmon fishing season clearly demonstrates the impact of water mismanagement: it's killing jobs and eliminating our fishing industry. After tens of millions of dollars spent, our fisheries are worse off than ever," said Zeke Grader of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. The coalition believes the proposed bond would do nothing to reverse this trend.

"Nowhere is the California water crisis more

evident than in the Delta. We can't continue basing California's water security on risky exports from the Bay-Delta Estuary," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, campaign director for Restore the Delta. She said the bond would increase water diverted from the fragile Delta, which will only compound the crisis.

"Communities are struggling as budget cuts dry up state support for our health, education and infrastructure programs. We can't afford to repay another \$9.2 billion dollar water bond," said Debbie Davis, legislative analyst for the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water.

"Ironically, this bond is called the 'Safe Drinking Water Act,' but it does nothing to address the drinking water crisis in thousands of California communities," Davis added. "We need funding for programs that help provide safe, clean drinking water. Despite its huge price tag, this bond doesn't deliver."



Bond opponents in San Francisco gather to hear Supervisor Tom Ammiano speak about the proposed water bond.

"Fortunately, we still have funding available from a prior water bond to address urgent needs across the state. Rather than rush into another billion-dollar bond this year, we're supporting passage of SB 1XX (Perata,

Machado and Steinberg), which would release 800 million dollars in unspent funds from Proposition 84, passed in 2006," said Mindy McIntyre of the Planning & Conservation League.



At the Visalia rally, Irma Arrollo of Lindsay speaks about the problems her small community is having with bad drinking water.

The coalition presented ten principles that address California's ongoing water crisis. The principles emphasize the need to provide safe, affordable drinking water for all, enforce land use regulations based on actual water availability, create a statewide water conservation program, protect watershed and aquatic ecosystems, and redirect water policy toward sustainability and equity.

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Activists, community members, environmental groups and others rally against Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein's water bond Tuesday in Sacramento.