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# Proposition 3: An \$8.87 billion water and habitat bond

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**By Jerry Meral**

SPECIAL TO CALMATTERS

"My turn: Proposition 3 will provide clean, safe, reliable water"



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## My turn: Proposition 3 will provide clean, safe, reliable water



**By Jerry Meral**, *Special to CALmatters*

California needs a clean, safe and reliable water supply to meet its needs as the population grows and the climate changes.

Proposition 3 will provide that water supply for people, agriculture, and our native fish and wildlife. Proposition 3 is a general obligation bond, and will not raise taxes. Some of its most important features include:

- Providing safe drinking water for disadvantaged people who lack clean water.
- Treating watersheds to make them more fire resilient, and to improve conditions after fires so that our watersheds continue to produce abundant



water. This will protect the lives and homes of people who live in the watersheds, while increasing the amount of water we can capture from runoff.

- Preparing our cities and farms for long-term drought.
- Improving the quality of water in our rivers, lakes, streams and coastal waters.
- Improving the safety of dams including Oroville and many other dams in Southern California.
- Restoring the capacity of canals which provide us with vitally important water.
- Preparing for drought by conserving water in urban and rural areas through leak detection and greater efficiency.
- Recycling wastewater for irrigation and industrial uses.
- Desalting and purifying contaminated groundwater and making it safe for use.
- Capturing stormwater and putting it to use.
- Reducing flood risk and diverting flood water to productive use.

Proposition 3 also provides water for ducks, shorebirds, and other wildlife. It will restore fish habitat, making our salmon and other fisheries more productive.

As our population grows, we must re-invest in our water supply systems and better manage our water. Proposition 3 includes modern, proven methods of supplying that water.

Fire destroys homes, ranches, and wildlife habitat. Our drying climate and warming temperatures increase fire danger, and greater fire intensity increases the damage fire does to our water supply.

After a fire, dense stands of young trees can increase fire danger, use excessive amounts of water and contribute to an unhealthy forest. By better managing our watersheds, we can reduce fire danger, improve water quality, increase water supplies, and produce a healthier and fire safe forest.

Local neighborhoods will benefit from Proposition 3 through stream improvement, tree planting, river parkway improvements and other projects that benefit urban areas. Disadvantaged youth will be employed to clean up creeks, build trails along rivers, and restore watersheds.



We cannot rely on the federal government to fix our water problems: we have to do it ourselves.

The benefits of Proposition 3 have been recognized by nearly everyone. Conservation and environmental groups endorse Proposition 3. They include National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, California Wildlife Foundation, Planning and Conservation League, Ducks Unlimited, Save the Bay, California Trout and 90 other national, state and local conservation groups.

More than 60 local water agencies support Proposition 3. They want their customers to have clean, safe and reliable water supplies, and they know that Proposition 3 will help them provide those supplies.

The business and agricultural communities unanimously support Proposition 3. Leading groups such as the California Chamber of Commerce, Agricultural Council of California, Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, San Diego Chamber of Commerce and dozens of others recognize the benefits Proposition 3 will bring to California's water supply.

Disadvantaged communities support Proposition 3. The Community Water Center, a leading advocate for providing clean safe drinking water for people who have contaminated water supplies, knows Proposition 3 will clean up water systems in poor communities throughout the state. Your yes vote on Proposition 3 will be a vote for a clean, safe and reliable water supply.

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*Jerry Meral is director of the director of the California Water Program of the [Natural Heritage Institute](#), and is the lead proponent of Proposition 3, [jerrymeral@gmail.com](mailto:jerrymeral@gmail.com). He wrote this commentary for CALmatters.*

## My turn: Proposition 3 is an irresponsible water bond



**By Eric Parfrey**, *Special to CALmatters*



Proposition 3 is an irresponsible approach to California's water problems. The nearly \$8.9 billion bond was crafted behind-the-scenes, contains critical elements that could directly harm the environment and turns important water policies on their head.

The bond substantially benefits billionaire stakeholders and is a bad water deal for Californians.

Bond proposals are best created through a legislative process that is transparent and open to the public. Instead, the Proposition 3 authors have taken a clandestine approach from the start.

The high cost of putting the bond measure on the ballot through signature-gathering has resulted in a pay-to-play structure, meaning well-funded private groups have paid for the campaign.

In exchange, these special interests have received funding guarantees within the bond—and they'll receive more than they've invested. If the bond passes, taxpayers will end up paying for investments that the private sector would have been required to make through enforcement of existing law. Exactly what projects are included in the bond was negotiated in private.

The proponents of Proposition 3 have added incentives that could worsen environmental quality. The initiative could open new funding pathways for dams that environmental groups and smart water policy advocates have opposed.

The bond could harm sensitive habitats. Proposition 3 proposes that the Habitat Conservation Fund should be spent on water acquisition. That fund has been an important resource for restoring non-water related habitats. In the face of climate change, the fund should be specifically allocated on wildlife corridor conservation.

The proposition also would shift money away from critical environmental investments. It would raid cap-and-trade funds designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and divert the money to unspecified water projects. This would undermine programs that lower emissions and improve air quality and public health for millions of Californians.

Proposition 3 undercuts "beneficiary pays," the principle that those who receive water are solely responsible for water supply projects. The bond would rob taxpayer dollars



to cover repairs even though the existing law states taxpayers are not liable.

The proposition specifies that the Friant Water Authority would receive \$750 million for repairs, reconstruction, and enlargement of nearby canals. Over-pumping of aquifers caused the groundwater subsidence that damaged the Friant-Kern Canal. Those who caused the damage should pay to repair the canals.

The proposition would essentially require taxpayers from across California to pay to fix the Central Valley canal that isn't even their water source. This makes no sense.

Proposition 3 began as a closed-door initiative and if passed would sidestep any legislative oversight. Unlike other environmental bonds passed by voters, Proposition 3 continuously appropriates all the funds. There will be no annual budgeting from the Legislature. This would eliminate future accountability to determine if the state can afford the spending and that it complies with the bond's stated priorities.

The ballot measure would add \$430 million to the state's general fund expenses annually for 40 years. Looking ahead, it's imperative that the state only pay for those projects that have substantial public benefit, such as a permanent solution to safe drinking water for everyone.

While Proposition 3 claims that it would provide clean water to those in need, only 10 percent of the bond would go directly to disadvantaged communities. Californians can do better. Instead of this corporate giveaway, we must address long-term water issues through a public legislative process.

The bottom line is that Proposition 3 would provide back-door subsidies for wealthy private interests. It will not benefit Californians. Proposition 3 deserves a vote of no in November.

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*Eric Parfrey is chairman of the executive committee of Sierra Club California, the state advocacy arm of the Sierra Club, [parfrey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:parfrey@sbcglobal.net). He wrote this commentary for CALmatters.*



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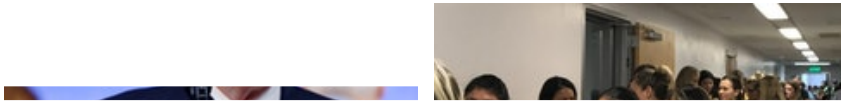
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