



ABAG/CALFED TASK FORCE/BAY AREA WATER FORUM E-M E M O

Stereograph: Devil's Tea Kettle , the Geysers, Sonoma County, circa 1860/1870. Available from the On line Archive of California; <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt6199q2kw>. Published courtesy of the University of California..

Date : January 11, 2005
To : ABAG/CALFED Task Force/BAY AREA WATER FORUM Members and Interested Parties
From: Kathleen Van Velsor, ABAG Program Manager/Senior Environmental Planner,
Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) 510-464-7959
Re : News and Information

We at the Association of Bay Area Governments and the San Francisco Estuary Project are deeply saddened at this week's news of **Jean Auer**'s death. Jean was a stellar addition to the ABAG/CalFed Task Force where she has been a cheerful and guiding presence. Her untimely death leaves a large void in many public policy circles and she will be missed. The 1/11 San Francisco Chronicle reports on Jean's many accomplishments in the water resources arena, including her important contributions to the San Francisco Estuary Project, Water Education Foundation and State Water Resources Control Board. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/01/11/BAGNFAO9FO1.DTL&type=printable>

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With expanded funding for public participation and a renewed emphasis on outreach and regional water management planning, we hope to kindle the interest of more cities and counties, special districts, agencies, planning professionals, industry, non-governmental organizations and others in our regional ABAG/CALFED Task Force and Bay Area Water Forum. If you are new to this mailing list, it is due to efforts by staff to identify community members who are engaged with water planning and management, watersheds, ecosystem restoration, floodplain management, water quality, water conservation and recycling and water/land use issues. *If this memo has been misdirected, please let us know and thanks for passing it along to someone in our organization who you think may be interested in receiving future informational mailings and attending meetings at the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).*

Meetings of the Task Force/Water Forum will continue to be facilitated. Speakers are selected to address a range of local and region-wide water management and planning issues, and to offer guidance on agency-sponsored programs. Participants are encouraged to RSVP to Kim Dixon at KimD@abag.ca.gov so that we can estimate meeting attendance.

For those not familiar with the workings of the Task Force/Water Forum, please refer to the ABAG web site at www.abag.ca.gov/cgi-bin/agendascaled.pl.

State of California Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP) concepts and essential background information may be found at <http://www.grantsloans.water.ca.gov/grants/integregio.cfm>. The links, *below*, will take you to other reference materials, water districts, government agency and non-governmental organization web sites.

Welcome:

At the Task Force/Forum in November 2004 we welcomed several new (and renewed) members and participants:

- Supervisor Rich Gordon, San Mateo County
- John Coleman, EBMUD Board
- Will Travis, Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- Stana Hearne, League of Women Voters
- Jennifer Fox, Energy Solutions
- Ken Schwarz, Jones & Stokes
- John Kopchik, Contra Costa County
- Supervisor Brad Wagenknecht, Napa County

E Memo Highlights:

- ✚ Delta levees' functioning at issue - San Francisco Chronicle news special
<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/01/10/BAGGAANTBS1.DTL> and
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/01/09/BAGRVANKV31.DTL>
- ✚ Water community reaches out to tsunami victims: "Together we can be a powerful force for healing and hope." <http://www.awwa.org/CorePage.cfm?CI=1>
- ✚ Environmental Programs in Governor's Budget, Contra Costa Times
<http://www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/news/local/10616521.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp>
- ✚ Federal water takings case provokes a California response
<http://www.senate.gov/~feinstein/04Releases/r-tulare-rul.htm>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17660-2004Dec21.html>
- ✚ Flood Warning: Responding to California's Flood Crisis, Cal. Resources Agency/DWR:
http://www.publicaffairs.water.ca.gov/newsreleases/2005/01-10-05flood_warnings.pdf

- ✚ Revised DWR/SWRCB/Cal Fed Proposition 50 funding calendar
<http://www.grantsloans.water.ca.gov/grants/integregio.cfm>
- ✚ State's water wars in no danger of drying up – from the Fresno Bee
<http://www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/news/10608366.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp>
- ✚ Public Policy Institute survey of local planners <http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=506>
- ✚ State Water Resources Control Board Water Recycling Funding Program (Prop. 50)
http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/recycling/docs/finalwrcpguidelines_oct2004.pdf
- ✚ San Francisco Estuary Project Newsletter <http://www.estuarynewsletter.com/>
- ✚ New San Francisco PUC Reports Forecast Water Demand and Estimate Conservation
http://sfwater.org/detail.cfm/MC_ID/5/MS_C_ID/16/MTO_ID/NULL/C_ID/2282
- ✚ ABAG regional projections publications available
[http://www.abag.ca.gov/cgi-bin/newspro/viewnews.cgi?newsid1103573984,58403,](http://www.abag.ca.gov/cgi-bin/newspro/viewnews.cgi?newsid1103573984,58403)
- ✚ Dublin prepares for population boom. Contra Costa Times.
<http://www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/news/10610377.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp>
- ✚ Marin County desalination issues
<http://www.marinij.com/Stories/0,1413,234~24407~2637916,00.html#>
- ✚ Watershed Assessment Manuals, U.C. Davis <http://cwam.ucdavis.edu/>
- ✚ Association of California Water Agencies Winter activities <http://www.acwanet.com/>
- ✚ Cal Fed Finance Plan on the Internet
<http://calwater.ca.gov/FinancePlanning/FinancePlanning.shtm>
- ✚ Santa Clara Valley Water District flood management
http://www.scvwd.dst.ca.us/News_and_events/News_releases/Nov.%2019,_2004.shtm
- ✚ Putah Creek Salmon Are Once Again Plentiful
http://www.dailyrepublic.com/articles/2005/01/09/local_news/news07.txt
- ✚ Guidelines for Implementation of Senate Bills 221 and 650
www.owue.water.ca.gov/Guidebook_101003.pdf

Around the Bay Region:

- ✦ Bay Area Water Conservation and Water Supply Agency Information <http://www.bawsca.org/>
- ✦ Zone 7 Water Agency Information <http://www.zone7water.com/current.html>
- ✦ Solano County Water Agency Information <http://www.scwa2.com/info.html>
- ✦ Sonoma County Water Agency Information <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/projects.html>
- ✦ Contra Costa County Water District Information
http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/cd/water_agency.htm
- ✦ San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Capital Improvements Update
http://sfwater.org/detail.cfm/MC_ID/7/MSC_ID/6/MTO_ID/NULL/C_ID/1451
- ✦ Alameda County Clean Water/Watershed Program
http://www.acgov.org/pwa/dept_development_services_clean_water_prog.shtml
- ✦ Alameda County Water District <http://www.acwd.org/>
- ✦ Napa County Watershed Information Center
<http://www.co.napa.ca.us/GOV/Departments/DeptPage.asp?DID=29000&LID=924>
- ✦ Santa Clara County
<http://www.sccgov.org/channel/0,4770,child%253D30022%2526sid%253D12867,00.html>
- ✦ Marin County Public <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/PW/Main/index.cfm>
- ✦ Sonoma County <http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/index.htm>
- ✦ San Mateo County http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/departement/home/0,,5562541_9876759,00.html
- ✦ Delta Protection Commission <http://www.delta.ca.gov/>
- ✦ Santa Clara Valley Water District Information <http://www.heynoah.com/>
- ✦ Contra Costa Water District Information <http://www.ccwater.com/>
- ✦ Marin Municipal Water District Information <http://www.marinwater.org/whatsnew.html>
- ✦ East Bay Municipal Water District Information <http://www.ebmud.com/>
- ✦ Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb2/>
- ✦ The Bay Institute <http://www.bay.org/main.htm>
- ✦ North Bay Watershed Association <http://www.nbwatershed.org/pages/welcome.php>
- ✦ Water Bond Coalition <http://www.waterbondcoalition.com>
- ✦ North Coast IRWM Program <http://www.northcoastirwmp.net/>
- ✦ State Coastal Conservancy <http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/index.htm>
- ✦ League of Women Voters of the Bay Area <http://www.lwvba-ca.org/>
- ✦ Bay Conservation and Development Commission <http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/>
- ✦ California State Coastal Conservancy <http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/>
- ✦ Bay Planning Coalition <http://www.bayplanningcoalition.org/>

Western Drought and Water Supply News

DWR: Hydrologic Conditions in California -- Executive Summary, Jan. 10, 2005
<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/queryForm?url=current/EXECSUM>

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Rain may or may not signal drought's end
Californian (Riverside County) - 1/9/05
By Dave Downey, staff writer

Our recent storms may signal the beginning of the end for the drought

that has strangled California, weather experts say. Then again, this winter's rain could just be a tease, and a wet spike in an ongoing long dry spell. Only time will tell.

"It sure looks good for drought relief this year," Doug LeComte, drought specialist and meteorologist for National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center in Camp Springs, Md., said in an interview last week.

Already, storms rushing down the coast of Alaska have snapped the region's string of six consecutive drier-than-normal years. And the climate center's online reports show that the parched conditions that have elevated fire danger and tightened water supplies have eased significantly all over the state and Southwest in the last six weeks.

But LeComte said "nobody knows for sure" if the winter wetness foreshadows a return to a string of abundant-rainfall years. "Unfortunately the science for long-range forecasting is just not strong enough to say whether that is the case," he said.

At least one weather expert believes the wetness will be short-lived.

Bill Patzert, a climatologist with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, said that, despite the drenching showers, he is sticking with his prediction that California is stuck in a 10- to 20-year drought.

"So we're just getting started," Patzert said. "I would call what we're having right now a spike. We're definitely not turning the corner yet."

The experts say the recent torrent is somewhat of an anomaly and they are at a loss to explain it.

"I can definitely state that you can't pin it on El Nino," said Wayne Higgins, principal scientist at the Climate Prediction Center in Maryland.

As a result, said Dan Cayan, a climate researcher for the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, "this (storm) event seems to be a bit of an enigma."

Yes, there is a mild El Nino brewing in the central equatorial Pacific, climate scientists say. But its watery fingerprints aren't on the recent deluge, which in short order propelled area rainfall totals above average seasonal totals, even as the wettest period of the season was just arriving.

Experts instead are fingering a ridge of high pressure that has been parked over the Gulf of Alaska and has been diverting storms around it, shooting them down a low-pressure trough along the West Coast into California.

"I call it the polar express: the jet stream on steroids," Patzert said.

That so-called polar express had soaked the Temecula-Murrieta area with

more than 15 inches of rain before this weekend's storms arrived, according to Temeculaweather.com. And about 20 inches had fallen on the nearby Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve, flooding and closing trails in the vicinity of the area's prized vernal pools, said Carole Bell, reserve manager.

Normally at this point in the season, which runs July 1 through June 30, just 3 inches has fallen on Southwest Riverside County. Historically, January, February and March are the rainiest months.

"It's been an amazing winter so far," LeComte said. "And I'm afraid that you have more coming your way in the next few days ---- a lot more." Indeed, this weekend's storms are expected to drop an additional 3 to 6 inches of rain before they split town.

With the ground saturated, the rain is expected to cause still more street flooding in low-lying areas, such as Old Town Murrieta, and threatens to send rivers of mud cascading down hillsides denuded by the recent wildfires. On the positive side, officials say, the moisture is expected to begin to shore up regional water supplies that have been stretched as of late.

Bob Muir, a spokesman for Metropolitan Water District, the giant Los Angeles-based wholesaler that supplies nearly all of Southern California with water, said "because of the early season rains, we've been able to put about 150,000 acre-feet of water into storage."

Also because of the rain, Imperial Valley farmers haven't used all the water they usually take from the Colorado River. That's allowed Metropolitan to buy extra river water and restock reservoirs such as the massive 800,000-acre-foot-capacity Diamond Valley Lake northeast of Temecula.

An acre-foot is the amount it takes to cover a football field a foot deep, and enough to sustain a pair of four-person households for a year. Diamond Valley's level fell sharply through summer 2004 as the drought continued and people sprinkled lawns, and Muir said its storage was expected to drop to 450,000 acre-feet. But now, the lake has rebounded to a more robust 625,000. And there is plenty of water for next summer.

"You can't help but be a bit optimistic about what's happened early this winter," Cayan said. "We have really seen a flurry of storms, something that we have not seen since the winter of '98.

That winter of seven years ago saw one of the two most powerful El Ninos of the 20th century, Higgins said. It set up a line of very-wet storms that roared in from the west, straight out of the Pacific, and thus was dubbed the pineapple express. Those systems dumped two to three times normal rainfall across Southern California.

That stormy episode of 1997-98 was marked by an enormous warming of the tropical Pacific Ocean, spreading all the way east to the coast of South America.

"That's where El Nino lives," Cayan said. "That's where the Pacific has its big punch, in terms of its influence on the storm track."

The Pacific is warming again this winter, but only by a couple of degrees and only in the middle of the ocean, Higgins said. Because this El Nino is weak, it has exerted very little influence over Southern California's weather so far, he said. However, it is beginning to build. And although scientists don't expect the condition to become nearly as pronounced as the El Nino of 1997-98, it is expected to strengthen and play a key role in keeping Southern California wet well into April.

While many are excited about the moisture, Patzert stressed that it must be kept in perspective.

"We have a long way to go to catch up," Patzert said. "There will be no quick fix. This rainfall is good, but it is not adequate unless it happens over several years."

A huge amount of Riverside and San Diego counties' drinking water comes from Colorado River and Northern California systems, which are anchored by large reservoirs fed by melting snow in the Rockies and Sierra. And while the snowpack is well above normal in the mountains for the first time in years, reservoir levels have plummeted as the drought worsened and many are still only about half full, LeComte said.

The level of Lake Powell, a giant reservoir on the Colorado River in Utah, for example, is 99 feet below normal, he said.

"It will take more than a few storms ---- and more than a couple winters ---- for that reservoir to go back up to normal," LeComte said.

And it will take a sustained wet period to rebuild underground water supplies that have been shrinking during the drought, officials say. Those supplies are fed directly by rain soaking into the ground.

So, officials say, people should not assume they have been given the green light to slack off in efforts to conserve water. Population growth, environmental concerns and the recent dryness continue to put pressure on the region's water supplies, Muir said.

Patzert said residents should remember that it has been wet only for the last several weeks or so.

"We talk about climate, but we get weather," Patzert said. "Remember, this has only been five or six rogue storms out of the Gulf of Alaska. That's all. This is not a decade of climate. Two months from now the sprinklers could be back on. All this could back off, and February and March could be dry."

And the drought could be back in full force again by next winter, he said. If so, it wouldn't be the first time that's happened. A two-decade drought in the middle of last century was punctuated by a couple of years of above-average rainfall.#

http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/01/09/news/californian/20_47_341_8_

See also U.S. Drought Monitor for current conditions: <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

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