

# AQUALLIANCE

DEFENDING NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WATERS

## AquAlliance Opposes the Water Bond

AquAlliance opposes the Water Bond, *Proposition 1* on the November 4, 2014 ballot. The measure does have funding for some beneficial and cost effective items, but the damage that will occur outweighs the benefits for one major reason:

**The Bond expands groundwater banking and conjunctive use.<sup>1</sup> [see definition below]**

This is a horrible idea for the NorthState. To store water in a groundwater bank there must first be space. Most areas of the NorthState have little “space” for recharge despite the intense interest by state and federal water agencies and local irrigation districts that sell surface water regularly to desert agriculture south of the Delta. These same agencies and districts have been and still are seeking to sufficiently manipulate groundwater into their transfer schemes, so that space is created to store surface water during wet years.<sup>2</sup> Over time, this conjunctive use activity *may remove the legal right to groundwater* for overlying landowners.<sup>3</sup>

The U.C. Cooperative Extension office for Tehama, Glenn, Colusa, and Shasta counties published a flyer that highlights some of the problems with conjunctive use activity:

**“While conjunctive use may prove successful for an individual or group of water users to manage an immediate situation, it is also possible for conjunctive use to unintentionally harm the groundwater basin and other groundwater users who are not involved in conjunctive use but are reliant on the same groundwater basin.”<sup>4</sup>** Even the state agency that is pushing conjunctive use projects acknowledges that, “Because most groundwater systems are slow responding systems, any damage to the system may require long periods to recover.”<sup>5</sup> The Bond funds for groundwater recharge and conjunctive use may harm thousands of groundwater dependent farms, communities, tens-of-thousands of domestic well users, streams, and urban and native landscapes in the NorthState. This has already happened many times over in the San Joaquin Valley.

AquAlliance seeks to prevent groundwater collapse in the NorthState, but it is widespread in some areas of southern California where groundwater basins have been so badly emptied that recharge has become an expectation. It is also unfortunate that some managers of southern groundwater look to the NorthState to supply water to refill their abused basins. This only continues California’s destructive practices and fails to require water managers to live within the hydrologic boundaries of their watersheds.

Here are some very specific Bond sections *without geographic limitations* that commingle positive projects like preventing groundwater pollution with detrimental ones that could adversely affect groundwater in the NorthState:

- **Chapter 6** [\$1.495 billion for all listed activities]
  - **79735.** (A) *Promote groundwater recharge...*
- **Chapter 7** [\$810 million for all listed activities]

- **79743.** (c) *Local and regional surface and underground water storage, including groundwater aquifer cleanup or recharge projects.*
- (g) *Conjunctive use of surface and groundwater storage facilities.*
- **Chapter 8** [\$2.7 billion for all listed activities]
  - 79751. (b) *Groundwater storage projects and groundwater contamination prevention or remediation projects that provide water storage benefits.*
  - (c) *Conjunctive use and reservoir reoperation projects.*

## AquAlliance has additional concerns about Proposition 1.

**The Bond seeks public funds to build storage projects that realize very little water and are very expensive** (see graph on homepage at [www.aqualliance.net](http://www.aqualliance.net)).<sup>6</sup> For example, after 30 years of study by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), the proposed Sites reservoir west of Maxwell in Colusa County does not yet have a feasibility study, a yield study, an estimate of public benefit, identified beneficiary partners, or a financing plan. When compared to the water yield and affordability of Urban Water Efficiency in our graph, building or expanding the reservoirs proposed in the Bond is a debt Californians don't need. We have plenty of existing reservoirs that aren't being filled. According to analysis by the Sacramento Bee, "The projected water yield from the new reservoirs is relatively low because most of the water they are capable of storing already belongs to someone else, or is obligated to fishery protection. The reservoirs would be required to pass this water through at the appointed time rather than selling it as a 'new' supply."<sup>7</sup>

### **The Bond facilitates the Bay Delta Conservation Plan's Twin Tunnels project.**

The \$137.5 million allocated for habitat restoration, water quality and fish protection facilities in the Delta is potential mitigation for BDCP's Twin Tunnels and/or existing water export projects. Taxpayers should not be on the hook because regulators fail to require special interest projects to mitigate their adverse impacts. And anything that facilitates the construction of the Twin Tunnels moves the draining of the NorthState that much closer. For more information on BDCP, see AquAlliance's comments on the Environmental Impact Statement/Report at: [www.aqualliance.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/AquAllianceCommentsBDCP072914.pdf](http://www.aqualliance.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/AquAllianceCommentsBDCP072914.pdf).

**The Bond decreases water recycling projects by 44% from what was in the 2009 Bond<sup>8</sup> and does nothing to respond to drought.** If we are to protect the NorthState from the state and federal habit of taking water from healthy watersheds that leave them devastated, then water recycling, conservation, and reclamation are exactly what California needs most. These lower cost and easily-implemented projects produce more reliable water quickly and actually create more jobs. They also lead California to watershed sustainability, which is what is desperately needed in the long-term.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the State of California, conjunctive use means the following: "The deliberate combined use of groundwater and surface water is commonly termed 'conjunctive use.' Conjunctive use means actively managing the aquifer systems as an underground reservoir. During wet years, when more surface water is available, surface water is stored underground by recharging the aquifers with surplus surface water."  
[www.cd.water.ca.gov/groundwater/conjunctiveuse.cfm](http://www.cd.water.ca.gov/groundwater/conjunctiveuse.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, September 2006. *Grant Assistance Agreement*.  
"GCID shall define three hypothetical water delivery systems from the State Water Project (Oroville), the

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Central Valley Project (Shasta) and the Orland Project reservoirs sufficient to provide full and reliable surface water delivery to parties now pumping from the Lower Tuscan Formation. The purpose of this activity is to describe and compare the performance of three alternative ways of furnishing a substitute surface water supply to the current Lower Tuscan Formation groundwater users to eliminate the risks to them of more aggressive pumping from the Formation and to optimize conjunctive management of the Sacramento Valley water resources."

<sup>3</sup> <http://scocal.stanford.edu/opinion/city-los-angeles-v-city-san-fernando-27778>

<sup>4</sup> Dudley, Toccoy and Allan Fulton, 2005/2006. CONJUNCTIVE WATER MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT? WHY CONSIDER IT? WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES? <http://ceteama.ucanr.edu/files/20596.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *California Water Plan 2009, volume 2, Resource Management Strategies, Chapter 8, Conjunctive Management and Groundwater Storage p.8-28*

[www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c08\\_conjunctmgmt\\_cwp2009.pdf](http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c08_conjunctmgmt_cwp2009.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Water yield numbers and costs for the three storage projects have varied widely in the last decade. AquAlliance chose to use the numbers put out by the agencies that promote them to err on the high side of water yield. The references are provided on our web site with the graphic comparison.

<sup>7</sup> [www.fresnobee.com/2014/06/01/3956458\\_should-calif-add-new-dams.html?rh=1](http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/06/01/3956458_should-calif-add-new-dams.html?rh=1)

<sup>8</sup> Sacramento Bee, August 14, 2014. *New Water Bond on Ballot.*

<http://www.sacbee.com/2014/08/13/6626961/california-lawmakers-reach-deal.html>