

Water Bond Provides Solutions for Forest Fires, Water Supply in Valley

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The [Rural County Representatives of California](#) (RCRC), of which Merced, Mariposa, Madera and Tulare counties are members, recently endorsed a statewide water bond that appears headed to the November ballot (referred to as “the November water bond”).

I voted to support this proposal at a recent RCRC Board of Directors meeting because it recognizes the complex water problems many rural counties face. More importantly, it provides real solutions.

The threat of forest fires and water supply reliability are two of the greatest problems faced by California’s rural counties today. The November water bond recognizes that healthy watersheds are resistant to the tremendously damaging fires we have seen in recent years.

The bond provides funds to restore watersheds, thin overgrown forests, remove dead trees, and to avoid flammable brush from taking over after fires.

The November water bond also provides funding for clean water and safe wastewater disposal for disadvantaged communities. Nearly a million people in California lack access to safe drinking water, and almost all are in rural communities, many in the Valley. This bond provides \$750 million to address these problems.

We must begin to manage groundwater in the Valley so that future generations will have access to this important resource. The Legislature passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act a few years ago, but did not provide funding. The November water bond provides \$675 million in grant funding to local groundwater management agencies to help better manage groundwater in our region.

The November water bond also includes funds to restore the capacities of the Madera and Friant Kern canals. These canals subsided during the drought, and cannot deliver their original design capacity of water to more than 15,000 farmers from Madera County to Kern County. Restoration of the capacity of these canals is vital to the economic viability of our region.

Now is the time to act. Fortunately, the State of California is in the position to afford a new water bond. We have liquidated our debt from the recession, paid off old bonds, and our economy is growing. The amount we spend on bonds is considered very prudent by bond rating agencies, and the interest rate we pay on bonds is AAA level.

In addition to RCRC, the November water bond is supported by the California Agricultural Council, the California Chamber of Commerce, the Association of California Water Agencies, California Fresh Fruit, the Community Water Center (dedicated to providing clean drinking water and safe wastewater disposal to rural communities), the dairy industry, Ducks Unlimited, the Friant Water Authority, and dozens of other water agencies, conservation groups, local businesses and farming organizations.

The November water bond will provide a needed infusion of funding for many important projects that will contribute to the health of our forests, the sustainability of our ground and surface water supplies, and help provide safe drinking water to our communities. I urge you to support it.

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