



Press Release

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Groundwater Pumping Threats in NorthState Counties Transfers Tied to Extra Pumping Plans

Chico, CA. AquAlliance, the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, and the California Water Impact Network filed a lawsuit in federal District Court against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) over Extra Groundwater Pumping Plans by Sacramento River water districts. The districts are hammering already taxed local groundwater basins during the serious 2021 drought, because they don't want to accept cuts in river water deliveries even though their 25% cut is much less than those other users have experienced.¹ The same districts have enough river water to sell to south-of-Delta interests, however (see table below).

Reclamation seeks to pay the Extra Groundwater pumpers for their energy costs based on the analysis found in the Environmental Assessment for *Groundwater Actions to Offset Surface Water Diversions from the Sacramento River in Response to Drought in 2021*.

The lawsuit² asks the court to declare Reclamation's Environmental Assessment invalid and issue a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction to stop the project that will harm local domestic and agricultural users, the Sacramento River, streams, and ecosystems. AquAlliance Executive Director, Barbara Vlamis, explained, "To have the federal government enable the abuse of groundwater by river water-rich Settlement Contractors, particularly in a critically dry year, is heinous. The Extra Groundwater Pumping Plan pits Sacramento River water right users against groundwater-reliant neighbors and habitats that are already struggling. To represent the people and environment, we had to pursue our legal options."

Even with the knowledge of California's climate and history, Reclamation failed to prepare for the dry year before us. "If Reclamation hadn't released so much water from Shasta Reservoir in April and May this year, there would have been more in storage for critical flows for salmon and Delta farmers," said Bill Jennings of CSPA.³

Plaintiffs are represented by the Aqua Terra Aeris law firm.

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AquAlliance is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit public benefit corporation established to defend northern California waters and to challenge threats to the hydrologic health of the northern Sacramento River watershed to sustain family farms, communities, creeks and rivers, native flora and fauna, vernal pools and recreation. www.aqualliance.net

¹ <https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsroomold/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=73745>

² <https://tinyurl.com/ektruuyz>

³ California Sportfishing Protection Alliance et al. 2021. *Proposed 2021 Temperature Management Plan for Central Valley Project Shasta- Trinity Division*. pdf p. 6.

Background

A) U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Environmental Assessment for *Groundwater Actions to Offset Surface Water Diversions from the Sacramento River in Response to Drought in 2021*

https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=50127

B) Maps illustrating the groundwater conditions in the Sacramento Valley.

<https://data.cnra.ca.gov/dataset/northern-sacramento-valley-groundwater-elevation-change-maps>

C) All named participants in the Extra Groundwater Pumping Program also plan to transfer water to south-of-the-Delta users in 2021.

District	Water to sell south-of-Delta (possible af) *	Extra Groundwater Pumping potential (af) **
Anderson Cottonwood WD	5,226	3,000
Glenn-Colusa ID	91,000	25,000
Princeton-Codora-Glenn ID	13,200	8,000
Provident ID	19,900	8,000
Reclamation District No. 108	55,000	12,500
Reclamation District No. 1004	27,175	4,300
River Garden Farms	20,000	3,000
Sycamore Mutual WC	25,000	3,000

* Numbers are found in the 2020 Long-Term Water Transfer Program FEIS/EIR. Each district’s total acre-feet are unknown for 2021.

** Reclamation asserts the total acre-feet will not exceed 60,000.