

SCOPE
Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment
TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY
POST OFFICE BOX 1182, SANTA CLARITA, CA 91386



May 26, 2016

Castaic Lake Water Agency
27234 Bouquet Cyn Rd.
Santa Clarita, CA 91350

Sent via email to: mail@clwa.org

Re: SCV Urban Water Management Plan Comments

Dear Board Members:

It has come to our attention that as of June 2nd, you have posted an agenda for the June 8th second hearing for this Plan that includes final edits and an approval Resolution. We wonder how your agency felt it could advertise that the second public hearing would be held on June 8th, supposedly allowing the public a last opportunity to comment. It seems that the water agencies had no intention of actually listening to the public on that date or accepting any additional comments as is required by law at a public hearing.

Nonetheless, we submit the following comments and ask that they be addressed in the final Plan. We reserve the right to present additional comments at the public hearing.

Section 4 - Recycled Water

Table 4-3 states that up to 17,030 AF of recycled water will be available through 2050. Yet there is no mention of any analysis of in stream flow requirements for the several endangered species that live in that stretch of the Santa Clara River, including the California fully protected UTS fish.

Section 4.1 describes several draft recycled water plans which were never completed, including the most recent plan which is nowhere near completion. In fact, CLWA has just released the Notice of Preparation. Facilities in the first two plans have not been built with the exception of recycled water for a golf course. We do not believe that it is legally acceptable to rely on draft plans, especially in light of the failure to build the recycled infrastructure described in those plans over the past 20 years.

Further, the NOP for the most recent plan update (noted above) seems to unfairly distribute the recycled water only to service areas of agency owned retailers Santa Clarita Water Co. and Valencia Water Co.

For example, in Phase 2B, the distribution by CLWA of recycled water from the Vista Canyon Reclamation Plant, included in this NOP will distribute all recycled water through its pipes only to areas served by its own Santa Clarita Water Division.

“Phase 2B would involve a partnership between CLWA, Santa Clarita Water Division (SCWD), and the Vista Canyon development to utilize recycled water produced from the Vista Canyon Water Factory (VCWF), which is proposed as part of the Vista Canyon land development and is expected to be in service at the time the development is completed.”¹

Also, in the 2012 agreement made with Newhall Land and Farming to acquire the Valencia Water Co. water section², CLWA promises all the recycled water to Newhall Land that it wants³. Given requirements for in stream flow and maintenance of downstream water levels, we ask that you explain how the remainder of the water will be fairly distributed when you have already promised some 30, 000 units in advance of any land use approvals, that they can have all the recycled water they want. We note that once again CLWA has promised water on a favored basis to a retail company (Valencia Water) that it owns in addition to favoring one specific developer – Newhall Land and Farming.

Many of the water wells in the eastern part of the Upper Santa Clara River basin are dry and not producing. Water well levels in this area of the river have dropped to their lowest levels since the low recordings of the 1991 drought.⁴ We believe that this distribution plan does not fairly distribute water in the eastern end of the basin, but rather, favors distribution only to the companies that are owned by CLWA. We note that water users throughout the Santa Clarita Valley have paid for the distribution system, not just those in the retailers owned by CLWA.

Section 4.3 describes a Chloride Compliance EIR that was set aside by the Court earlier this year based on concerns that the adequacy of the in stream full for a fully protected species was not investigated. In response to that the Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District voted on 3-23-16⁵ to remove the entire recycling part from the EIR. A new document was re-certified without any recycled water. Therefore at the moment, the UWMP may not rely on any recycled water at all. This fact is not even mention in the document.

Yet a second, additional, other planning document is also referenced here. This is the "Santa Clarita Valley Rules and Regulations Handbook (Kennedy Jenks 2016b). This document is also NOT included here, even as an appendix. Its content is not described in the document as required by CEQA.

¹ NOP. Page 1 The entire Notice of Preparation describing this recycled water plan can be viewed here:

http://clwa.org/docs/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/NOP_FINAL.pdf and is incorporated by reference

² *Eminent Domain Settlement Agreement between Castiac Lake Water Agency, Newhall Land and Farming and Valencia Water Co.*, Dec. 2012. Section 6 Full document incorporated by reference

³ *Ibid.*, See section 6.11, full Agreement is in the possession of CLWA and hereby incorporated by reference

⁴ See Newhall County Water District agenda for May 12th meeting well level reports at

http://ncwd.org/OB/Agendas/Agenda_items_2016-5-12/G4.pdf

See also Santa Clarita Water Div May 9th, 2016 at

<http://clwa.org/docs/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ROC-Packet-050916.pdf> Well graphs begin at page 9

⁵ See minutes of SCV Sanitation meeting 3-23-16, available here:

<http://www.lacsd.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=12382> and attached.

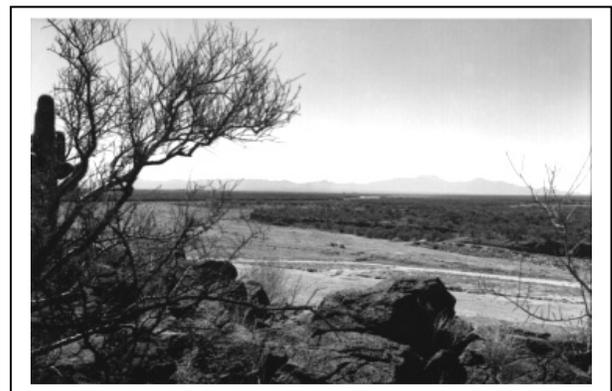
Unsustainable Pumping of the Santa Clara River Alluvial Aquifer

Sustainable use of the alluvial aquifer was estimated to be 32,000 AF for the Upper Basin for many years.⁶ Prior to the 1986 Slade report its yield was estimated to be even lower. We have attached a compendium of water reports citing those levels. It is interesting to note that the Slade report was commissioned during the housing boom of 1986, and found that more water would be available. As another housing boom developed around 2000, low and behold a 2000 “update” reported that even more water could be pumped from the Santa Clara River. In 2004 a new study conducted under the auspices of the Valencia Water Co claimed that 35,000AF may now be safely taken out of the Santa Clara River, even though the Slade report stated on page 88 of his 1986 report that continued development and hardscaping would reduce recharge to this aquifer. (reference attached, complete reports included by reference)

For the last decade, this amount has been exceeded when pumping by Newhall Land, golf course and private well use is included.⁷ It is odd that the agencies’ report ignores this pumping as though it is not occurring when in fact it is substantially exceeding safe yield. This pumping, and the over draft is not indicated on the charts or discussed in the body of the report.

Indications of overdraft of the basin abound, including most evidently the biological indication of vegetative loss in the center of the river from the drop in water levels. This indication is clearly cited in the USGS Circular 1186⁸:

“Ground-water pumping can affect not only water supply for human consumption but also the maintenance of instream-flow requirements for fish habitat and other environmental needs. Long-term reductions in streamflow can affect vegetation along streams (riparian zones) that serve critical roles in maintaining wildlife habitat and in enhancing the quality of surface water. Pumping-induced changes in the flow direction to and from streams may affect temperature, oxygen levels, and nutrient concentrations in the stream, which may in turn affect aquatic life in the stream.”



⁶ Slade, Richard, *Hydrological Investigation Perennial Yield and Artificial Recharge Potential of the Alluvial Sediments of the Santa Clarita Valley*, 1986, full report incorporated by reference

⁷ See Santa Clarita Valley Water Report located on your website at <http://clwa.org/docs/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014-Santa-Clarita-Valley-Water-Report.pdf>, pages 7 an 8 (add alluvial use on table 2-1 to use on table 2-2.)

⁸ “Circular 1186, “*Sustainability of Ground Water Resources*”, page 34, the full report is available at: http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/circ1186/html/gw_effect.html and is hereby incorporated by reference.

We believe the agency has purposely ignored the issue of overdraft and subsidence because there is a real and obvious problem. It is imperative that a study of this issue be conducted due to the well-known fact that subsidence may preclude aquifer re-charge due to soil compression. Taking such a risk with our limited water resources is not acceptable.

The alluvial aquifer is currently at low water levels not seen since 1991⁹. This problem was clearly brought to light in April of this year when the SWP foothill feeder was closed for one week, eliminating imported water for the upper basin area. Apparently, alluvial ground water wells reached such a low level, that they broke air and produced cloudy water for residential customers during this time.¹⁰

Loss of alluvial well production is also documented in the latest Whittaker Bermite NPDES Report¹¹ which states:

“Since June 9, 2015, the high flow well 75-MW-35 has not been functional due to pump operational issues associated with low water levels in the well. Additionally, the low flow wells do not produce enough groundwater, if any, to allow treatment and discharge to the storm drain. Due to the significant decline of the groundwater levels in the Northern Alluvium, all the NATP wells have been shut down and are not extracting groundwater for treatment at the NATP. Therefore, no discharge to the storm drain from the NATP occurred during this reporting period.

An untenable UWMP pumping regime is also indicated by the Agencies’ own report on Alluvial Pumping¹² which states beginning on page 3:

“Conclusions

Rainfall records, groundwater level monitoring, and groundwater modeling together indicate that little to no recharge has occurred to the Alluvial Aquifer since the winter of 2010/spring of 2011 rainfall season. The groundwater level monitoring program shows that groundwater levels have declined at a fairly steady rate since that time, as has been observed in other past periods of local drought conditions (such as occurred in 1984 through 1992 and again in 1999 through 2004). The continued decline in groundwater levels that was observed in 2014 at many Alluvial Aquifer wells will continue in 2015 if little to no rainfall and streamflow recharge occurs to the local aquifer systems during the winter of 2014/spring of 2015 rainfall season.

Under this scenario, and assuming there are no new wells or modifications to existing wells and pumping systems, GSI’s primary conclusions regarding the achievability of the target pumping volumes from the Alluvial Aquifer in 2015 are presented in Table 1 and are summarized as follows:

⁹ See Newhall County Water District agenda for May 12th meeting well level reports at http://ncwd.org/OB/Agendas/Agenda_items_2016-5-12/G4.pdf

See also Santa Clarita Water Div May 9th, 2016 at

<http://clwa.org/docs/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ROC-Packet-050916.pdf> Well graphs begin at page 9

¹⁰ SCV Signal, April 11, 2016, <http://www.signalscv.com/section/36/article/150957/>

¹¹ CDM Smith, Inc., *4th Quarter 2015 NPDES Monitoring Report NPDES Permit No. CAG994004, Compliance File No. CI-8727 Northern Alluvium Treatment Plant (NATP) Former Bermite Facility 22116 Soledad Canyon Road, Santa Clarita, California*, February 12, 2016 Page 1 This document can be accessed at: http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/1180830240/Whittaker_NPDES_4th%20QTR%202015%20Report_21216.pdf, and is hereby incorporated in full by reference.

¹² Technical Memorandum, *Evaluation of Groundwater Pumping Targets for the Alluvial Aquifer in 2015 Santa Clara River Valley East Subbasin (Santa Clarita Valley, California)*, GSI Engineering

1. For the three retail water purveyors combined, the achievable yield from the Alluvial Aquifer in 2015 is likely between 17,100 and 21,800 AFY. The Groundwater Operating Plan’s drought-year target of 27,400 AFY of collective production by the three retail water purveyors will not be achievable if the drought continues through the winter of 2014/spring of 2015 rainfall season.
2. The largest shortfall in yield is estimated to occur for VWC. The estimated achievable production volume for VWC wells (between 14,600 and 17,900 AFY in 2015) creates shortfalls of (a) 3,600 to 6,900 AFY compared with VWC’s target production under the Groundwater Operating Plan and (b) 1,100 to 4,400 AFY compared with the 2015 target production volume that was of interest to VWC.
3. The estimated shortfalls in groundwater production from the Alluvial Aquifer are notably smaller for SCWD and NCWD than for VWC.
 - a. SCWD’s wells likely can produce between 1,700 and 2,700 AFY from the Alluvial Aquifer in 2015. This represents a shortfall of 1,800 to 2,800 AFY compared with the Groundwater Operating Plan, and a shortfall of 1,500 to 2,500 AFY compared with the 2015 target production volume that was tested by GSI.
 - b. NCWD’s wells likely can produce between 800 and 1,200 AFY from the Alluvial Aquifer in 2015. This represents a shortfall of 200 to 600 AFY compared with the Groundwater Operating Plan, and a shortfall of zero to 500 AFY compared with the 2015 target production volume that was tested by GSI.
4. The estimates of the achievable yield listed in Table 1 are reasonable estimates of the groundwater production capacity from the Alluvial Aquifer that the three retail water purveyors can expect to achieve in 2015 should the local drought continue. Actual groundwater production volumes from the Alluvial Aquifer could be notably higher if there are appreciable amounts of rainfall, stream flow, and groundwater recharge during the winter of 2014/spring of 2015 rainfall season.”

Table 1
Alluvial Aquifer Pumping Analysis for 2015 - All Retail Water Purveyors

Prepared by GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

	Pumping	Shortfall	
VWC	14,600 to 17,900	-6,900 to -3,600	-4,400 to -1,100 VWC
SCWD	1,700 to 2,700	-2,800 to -1,800	-2,500 to -1,500 SCWD
NCWD	800 to 1,200	-600 to -200	-500 to -100 NCWD

The UWMP indicates additional planned pumping from the alluvial aquifer can provide water supply in a drought scenario. Based on the current drought scenario and the drop in the water table forcing well closures, this is a false statement. The report should be revised to reflect the actual state of the alluvial aquifer. Not to do so puts our community at risk.

Water Promised Pre-Emptively to Newhall Land and Farming’s Westside Developments

Your agency has made substantial promises to Newhall Land and Farming to supply future projects even though some are outside your service area and none have received any final, or in some cases, not even preliminary land use approvals.

Supposedly some of the supply for the unapproved Newhall Ranch project will come from the very agricultural pumping that is currently unsustainable. (see above). Please discuss how you will accommodate this pumping without substantial overdraft of the river alluvium.

Additionally, while Newhall Land originally stated in its 2003 Newhall Ranch Specific Plan EIR that the ground water would come from its C wells in its agricultural fields, all subsequent EIRS have stated that the ground water will be pumped from Valencia Water Co.'s E Well. Since you now own Valencia Water Company, we are sure you are aware of this discrepancy. E wells, located in Castaic, already serve the Commerce Center and many residential units.¹³ Will sufficient water supplies remain to serve existing residents?

We note that your February 2010 letter (attached) to the County of Los Angeles regarding the adequacy of water supply for the 2012 Area Plan Update (One Valley One Vision), included a statement on page 2 that:

“Additionally, the updated 2005 UWMP charts do not incorporate demands or supplies for the OVOV Planning area that are outside the CLWA service area and which constitute part of the 460,000 to 485,000 population projection cited above.”

How are these amounts now included in this Plan with very similar numbers?

We ask that you clearly show these reserved amounts in your charts as indicated in the 2012 Valencia Water Company Purchase Contract that your agency made with Newhall Land and Farming (full document incorporated by reference). We also wonder whether reserving water for a particular developer in advance of land use approvals is a legal option for a public agency.

Failure to Disclose Loss of Supply in the Saugus Aquifer Supply Due to Pollution

SCOPE has been a member of the Whittaker Bermite Community Advisory Group (CAG) for many years. In that capacity we have monitored, commented on documents and participated from a community perspective in clean up and monitoring activities related to the ammonium perchlorate pollution plume in the Saugus aquifer.

We were among the groups in 2004 that joined in recommending that barrier wells be placed on the Whittaker Bermite property rather than continuing to use Saugus Well 1 and 2. We feared, as did others, that those wells would not capture the pollution plume as predicted. In fact, your modeling was wrong and Saugus wells 1 and 2 failed to capture and stop the spread of the ammonium perchlorate pollution plume. The plume went past these wells and is now continuing to move in a westerly direction, closing several additional wells (V201, V205). Continued pumping from this source seems to be aggravating the problem.

We have also seen the carcinogenic pollutants TCE and PCE increasingly become evident over the past decade in this aquifer. Although Saugus wells 1 and 2 now have water treatment for perchlorate, no well treatment exists for TCE and PCE. Instead, the Agency has opted to blend the water so that these pollutants remain below detection levels per as required by the Dept. of

¹³ Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report - Newhall Ranch, Landmark Village (County Project No. 00-196), Chapter 4 Water Resources, full document included by reference.

Health Services. We do not support this method since it can result in undetected spikes of these pollutants entering the drinking water system.

The pumping capacity of these treated wells has been reduced by half due to the treatment process, as your agency is well aware. Treatment capacity from closed wells V201 and V205 is also not available as admitted in the Plan. The Urban Water Management Plan should indicate these facts, yet it states not only that full capacity of the Saugus is available when in fact it is not, due to pollution levels in excess of drinking water standards, but also goes further to say that in an emergency up to 30,000 AF is available from this source.

Due to a persistent lack of rainfall, it appears that the current drought emergency will continue this year even though mandatory cutbacks have been discontinued. If that is the case, these statements are simply not accurate. This aquifer has never produced 30,000 AF of water. The highest production was 14,471 AF in 1991¹⁴ during the last drought and before the perchlorate pollution was discovered.

It should also be admitted by the agencies, that, as has been stated by all water reports beginning with the 1972 DWR report (face sheet included in the compendium of water reports), the Saugus and Alluvial Aquifers are connected. A draw done in the Saugus Aquifer will also lower the water table in the Alluvial Aquifer. Again, proposed future emergency water withdrawals seem substantially overstated.

CLWA's approved 2000 UWMP also indicated that the full capacity of the Saugus Aquifer was available in spite of the supply being polluted beyond drinking water standards and the lack of data to substantiate an ability to pump up to 30,000AF while still producing a supply that meets drinking water standards. The Friends of the Santa Clara River litigated that approval over concerns for the health and safety of our community. The result was a published Appellate Court decision in their favor.¹⁵

We therefore urge CLWA to accurately disclose the water supply availability from this aquifer. Over-stating supply from this polluted source fails to protect the public health.

Inadequate Public Outreach

In an effort to involve the community in water supply planning we tried to send out a link about when and where to send written comments. Unfortunately we were unable to do this because your website has no notice soliciting written comments or disclosure of comment deadlines.

We also believe that it was negligent of the Agency not to include the DWR checklist in Appendix B. Did you not want the public to know what is expected in this Plan?

Appendix F is also missing, making it impossible to see if CLWA has complied with the requirement to develop a water shortage contingency plan and will supposedly only be made available on the evening of the June 8th hearing.

Such actions make it seem that CLWA and the other agencies involved in this Plan prefer that this process remain difficult and obtuse to members of the public.

¹⁴ See Santa Clarita Valley Water Report located on your website at <http://clwa.org/docs/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014-Santa-Clarita-Valley-Water-Report.pdf>, after page 7 on Table 2-1

¹⁵ *Friends of the Santa Clara River v. Castaic Lake Water Agency*, Cal. App. 5th Dist., 09/22/2004

Conclusion

We are discouraged by the incompleteness of the public draft and the several omissions of information. We urge the Board to delay approval of this plan until the whole document, with corrections, can be circulated.

This Plan purports to disclose that our area has an adequate water supply to meet the approximately 500,000 people projected in the 2012 OVOV area plan update even after a substantial and ongoing drought caused reduced alluvial supply and well closures due to pollution reduced pumping from the Saugus Aquifer.

The Plan claims it will achieve its supply targets in large part through conservation. Residents of the SCV already cut back their water usage by 25% over the last year. It is doubtful that an additional cutback of this magnitude could be achieved. Please explain how supply will be achieved if residents do not comply with additional cutbacks.

We therefore urge you to revise the UWMP to show reduced alluvial pumping and the actual current amount of Saugus supply available after reduced pumping due to the treatment process and well closures in accordance with your own reports

The Plan also purports to have adequate supply due to water stored from previous years in Kern County Water Banks. The public has been told that these banked water supplies are for emergency back up to ensure water to the existing community in times of drought. Yet the water supply charts make it appear that this water is available for new approvals. Since this source is limited and may disappear over time due to climate change caused surface water reductions, we believe that it is important that the Agency make it clear to planners that this water is not available for new approvals.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our concerns. We note again that public comments can be received and must be considered up until and during the public hearing scheduled on June 8th. We reserve the right to submit additional comments prior to or at the noticed public hearing.

Sincerely,

Carmillis Noltemeyer

Attachments as indicted in the text.