

# Press Release:

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### GLENN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT SUPPORTS INSTALLATION OF GROUND WATER INFRASTRUCTURE Regional Ground Water at Risk

**Chico, CA** – Butte Environmental Council’s challenge of Glenn Colusa Irrigation District’s (GCID) project that GCID claimed was exempt from environmental review was denied today. Despite the project’s connection to myriad regional planning documents (see below) and GCID’s own local plans, Judge Byrd ruled that installing seven production wells into the deep portions of the aquifer underlying Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties was just a monitoring research project. BEC alleged that the seven wells project is part of a concerted and expanding effort to install infrastructure into the Tuscan ground water so that it may, as stated in numerous planning documents and contracts, become integrated into the state and federal water supply. This project, installing seven production wells, will extract a volume of ground water that exceeds the current utilization by the city of Chico in one year, creating the likelihood of a significant adverse environmental impact without the benefit of mitigation.

“BEC is disappointed in the ruling,” stated Barbara Vlamis, BEC’s Executive Director. “It is clear that the judge believed that the seven wells project was an isolated project without environmental impacts, but BEC still views it quite differently,” she continued. During the hearing, Judge Byrd found that GCID’s monitoring project in the *Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan* was isolated from their *Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District Water Management Program* that includes “the installation of up to ten new district-owned production groundwater wells” for ground water production and the *Stony Creek Fan Partnership Conjunctive Management Program* to name just two more planned projects. BEC’s litigation merely sought to have GCID analyze the impacts from their recently completed, current, and known future projects so that the public could review the projects comprehensively, comment, and see what safeguards existed to protect other ground water users and the environment as required in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Judge Byrd’s ruling allows GCID to claim an exemption from CEQA and to defer analysis to a later date.

GCID’s projects are using public money to expand its role in water management and marketing. As mentioned above, the current project is part of a much larger set of plans to “integrate” ground water into the state and federal water supplies. GCID has been pursuing these plans for many years. While speculators are allowed to propose projects in California, the law requires that they analyze the potential impacts and mitigate them through the CEQA. The federal contract that is funding part of this project is also seeking 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.” This would include over 87% of Butte County’s population. “BEC maintains that all these projects are related, could cause serious environmental and life-altering impacts, and that they should be reviewed comprehensively under CEQA,” concluded Vlamis. BEC is evaluating its options for future action.

Plans that GCID is party to:

- *Sacramento Valley Water Management Agreement* (Phase 8, October 2001).

- *Estimating the Potential for In Lieu Conjunctive Water Management in the Central Valley of California (2002).*
- *Regional Integration of the Lower Tuscan Formation Using Conjunctive Water Management in the Sacramento Valley Regional Integration of the Lower Tuscan Groundwater Formation into the Sacramento Valley Surface Water System Through Conjunctive Water Management (June 2005).*
- *Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (2006).*