



..... ordinary and not-so-ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world." (Paul Hawken)

2009 Challenges/Responses

There are forces at work that intend to cause the complete collapse of the hydrologic system in the middle of the Sacramento Valley. It is a method that was used previously in the Owens Valley, San Fernando Valley, and more recently with the Cosumnes River basin.

- **Drought Water Bank Challenge**

The proposed Drought Water Bank (the state's response to drought), which would potentially allow up to 340,000 acre feet* of ground water substitution in 2009 and future years, is the immediate threat to the regional aquifer. Local districts substituted ground water for 105,000 acre feet of surface water that was sold for the 1994 Drought Water Bank (DWB). The impacts to Butte County agricultural, residential, and municipal wells were substantial. Urban areas in California need minimal drinking water (one percent of what they import), but their current conservation efforts are minor despite the exaggerated proclamations of drought.

BEC Response

BEC has used and is continuing to use proactive efforts with the water agencies, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the federal Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau), in an attempt to halt ground water substitution during the 2009 DWB. BEC also met with the Director's of both the aforementioned agencies in person and has communicated numerous times to them in writing and through their staff. In addition, BEC previously commented on the Supplemental EIS/EIR for the Environmental Water Account, the environmental review that DWR will use for their California Environmental Quality Act obligation.

- **Glenn Colusa Irrigation District's Seven Production Wells Project Challenge**

The proposed project will install seven more production wells into the deep portions of the aquifer underlying Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties to test their capacity to extract ground water. They will pump in nine months what the entire City of Chico uses annually.

BEC Response

BEC filed two lawsuits thanks to the significant, pro bono investment of Marty Dunlap and Roy Ekland. Even though GCID prevailed before the Glenn County Superior Court, this effort altered the timing of the project, the responsibility accepted by the federal water agency, and possibly the scope of the project. BEC

is now in a position to sue in federal court and to negotiate changes to the research design.

- **Butte County's "research" project**

Butte County wants to conduct "tests" that it claims will help with local water protection. A U.C. Cooperative Extension article (February 2006), supporting water transfers, defended the need for these types of tests stating, "Scientific studies are needed to support conjunctive water management [**selling surface water and substituting groundwater, also called double dipping**]. They provide important data to understand the geology of aquifer systems, how and where surface water replenished the groundwater, and flow directions and gradients of groundwater." However, scientists unaffiliated with DWR, the Bureau, and U.C. Cooperative Extension say, there are abundant opportunities to model aquifer system hydrodynamics without rapidly increasing exploitation of the groundwater. BEC believes independent scientific studies should be performed before ramping up extraction in order to prevent irreversible impacts associated with ground water overdraft. Butte County, as illustrated above, is deeply enmeshed in the water transfer effort, seeks and accepts money from the agencies in search of large quantities of water, and demonstrated a disinterest in ground water protection, so how can it claim to be independent party?

BEC Response

BEC filed a lawsuit in October 2008 thanks to the pro bono work of Richard Harriman. The county is outraged that their project has been challenged for inadequate disclosure of its impacts to the environment in the short and long term. A flurry of written, public responses by the county actually helped illustrate its bias: concern over surface water rights and not ground water protection. BEC continues settlement discussions.

What you can do to protect Butte County's ground water, creeks, salmon, orchards, and cities.

- Volunteer your talent and/or time.
- Contribute financially through BEC's monthly or quarterly Angel program or to the immediate water effort.
- Recruit friends, colleagues, and family to join you in your efforts to support BEC's challenge of some of the most powerful forces in California.

* An acre foot of water is equal to 325,900 gallons of water.