

# VENTURA COUNTY



# STAR

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## Opinion

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### Editorial

## Twin tracks to improve state's water supply

The California Legislature is struggling to put a multibillion-dollar bond measure on the November statewide ballot to improve and protect the state's water supply.

Lawmakers need to reach an agreement to address uncertainties and shortcomings in California's water supply.

In fact, water would be a top concern even without the current drought, which prompted Gov. Jerry Brown to call for people to voluntarily cut water use by 20 percent — a goal that hasn't been achieved.

And there's another reason for legislators to cooperate, compromise and craft a new bond measure. They need to replace a doomed \$11.1 billion water bond proposal written in 2009 but which has been kept off the ballot because politicians expect voters to reject it on grounds

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that it's too big and contains too much pork.

Yet, in June, the state Senate couldn't muster enough votes to pass a somewhat smaller, replacement bond measure, Senate Bill 848.

SB 848, written by Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, offered positive elements such as \$3 billion for water storage improvements; \$1.9 billion for regional drought-response programs such as desalination, water conservation and recycling; about

\$900 million to clean up water supplies in hundreds of communities without drinkable supplies; and \$500 million for programs aimed at capturing stormwater runoff.

SB 848 also did something that any water bond probably will have to do to be successful in November. It avoided endorsing the controversial Bay Delta Conservation Plan — otherwise, a north-south water war could defeat the measure in November, legislators have been advised.

The Star has endorsed the public process underway to examine the Bay Delta plan, which we believe has enormous potential advantages for Ventura County. The Bay Delta plan could help create a more reliable water supply for the county's residents and businesses.

As things stand now, a major earthquake in the San Francisco Bay region could damage levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, the source of much of the water used in Ventura County communities. A levee break could allow saltwater to mix with the freshwater that's sent to Southern California.

Such damage to our freshwater supply would be a crippling blow to the local economy, costing billions of dollars and many jobs. The cities of eastern Ventura County, for example, are 100 percent dependent on the Delta as their water source.

The Bay Delta plan includes a proposal for twin tunnels underground to carry water under the environmentally fragile Delta. The cost of the infrastructure would be paid for by water agencies and their customers.

But the Bay Delta plan doesn't have to be a direct part of a water bond measure in November, which would ask voters to approve general-obligation bonds to be repaid out of the state's general fund. (Meanwhile, the public comment period is scheduled to end July 29 for the draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan and its environmental impact report.)

The Legislature should refrain from actions that could jeopardize the Bay Delta plan at this point. The members of the Senate and Assembly should be able to agree on a measure that spurs other long-term changes that also would be vitally important for our county and the state.

Increasing storage capacity, making desalination a higher priority and other programs to promote conservation and recycling are positive ideas.



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