

Schwarzenegger calls for more surface water storage
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By Kate Campbell, Assistant Editor

Faced with an ever increasing population and greater uncertainty about water supplies, state political leaders are proposing a plan to increase surface water storage facilities. Gov. Schwarzenegger was joined at public events last week by state Sen. Dave Cogdill, R-Fresno, author of Senate Bill 59, which includes a bond proposal for more surface storage. It is set to begin committee hearings April 24.

If approved by voters in the November 2008 election, the bond measure would provide nearly \$4 billion to improve surface water storage infrastructure and serve as a major piece of a larger plan to ensure water availability and quality.

California Farm Bureau Federation leaders are watching this legislation closely as details are being developed. Although no position has yet been taken on the bill, CFBF is encouraged by the renewed interest in surface storage.

Noting that no new water storage projects have been completed in California in more than 30 years, Charlie Crabb, CFBF Governmental Affairs manager, said, "The convergence of issues?climate change, population growth, aging infrastructure?has come together to underscore awareness that water is what drives the state's economy.

"It's important that we add to the mix of underground, conservation and surface storage resources," Crabb said. "California agriculture has always been proactive in the wise use of water resources and the need to ensure continued water supply."

At press conferences last week at Friant Dam east of Fresno and the State Water Project Operations Center in Sacramento, Schwarzenegger said, "We are in desperate need of more above the ground water storage, and we want to make sure that we put the spotlight on this issue. This is absolutely essential for the state of California."

Schwarzenegger said that in the next 20 years the state's population will grow by 30 percent. That's equal to adding three cities the size of Los Angeles to California.

"Earthquakes and major storms are also a major problem that we have here," Schwarzenegger said. "We are very vulnerable. They could damage the Delta and threaten the water supply for 25 million Californians.

"That is?two-thirds of all Californians are threatened with having their water supply cut off if we have a major earthquake or a huge, major storm. Global climate change, as you have just heard earlier, will reduce snowpack. That means more floods in the winter and less drinking water in the summer. Rising sea levels could contaminate the Delta with saltwater. So those are all the kinds of problems and threats that we are facing."

Likely sites for new reservoirs are the west side of the Sacramento Valley and Temperance Flat, which is upstream of Friant Dam on the San Joaquin River. A new reservoir at Temperance Flat would supply 500,000 acre feet of water, enough for 1 million households in a region where population is growing at a blistering rate.

The governor also is calling for \$1 billion for Delta sustainability, \$250 million for restoration projects, including the Klamath, San Joaquin and the Sacramento rivers, the Salton Sea and the Delta. In addition, he wants voters to approve \$200 million for water conservation grants for local communities.

Cogdill told those attending the media events, "I don't think we can overstate the importance of this legislation. This has been a long, long time coming, and those of us who represent this area and live in this valley know how important water is to our economy and to our future."

Given the years of contentious debate over the need and impact of additional surface water storage, David Guy, executive director of the Northern California Water Association, called the governor's efforts to improve the water supply situation a "bold stance."

"Surface water storage is not universally popular, but this governor is looking long into the future. It's really a refreshing outlook.

We need all kinds of additional water storage facilities and improved surface water storage will need to be integrated into below-ground storage and improved conservation," Guy said. #