

Water bond measures endorsed by policy group

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Two new water bonds slated to be put before California voters in 2018 have received the endorsement of a key water policy group.

The Association of California Water Agencies' board has voted unanimously to support a \$4 billion June ballot measure for water and parks projects and an anticipated \$8.9 billion November initiative proposed by former state resources official Gerald Meral.

ACWA Executive Director Timothy Quinn said the bonds would provide critical funding for water management projects ranging from recycling technologies to groundwater recharge and flood protection.



Gerald Meral

"We view (the measures) as complementary," Quinn told the Capital Press. He added the bonds "would provide needed funds to continue to implement (Gov. Jerry Brown's) Water Action Plan."

The ACWA, whose 430 public agency members handle 90 percent of the water delivered to the state's cities, farms and businesses, was set to give a presentation on the bonds at its fall conference Nov. 29 in Anaheim.

Though the measures would come just four years after voters approved Proposition 1, a \$7.5 billion water bond, Quinn believes there's still a willingness among the state's residents to support water system

improvements.

"We would urge voters to look at both sides, and we think they will likely vote yes," he said. "Water bonds have consistently been successful in California."

The June measure was placed on the ballot by legislators, who approved a bill by state Sen. Kevin de Leon, D-Los Angeles. The measure will include \$750 million for flood protection and prevention and \$500 million for such projects as safe drinking water and groundwater sustainability.

Meanwhile, Meral, a former deputy secretary of the state Natural Resources Agency, has been gathering signatures this fall for his proposal for such water-related projects as repairs to the sinking Friant-Kern Canal in Tulare and Kern counties.

Meral has said his initiative is "a follow-up" to Proposition 1, noting that it's heavy on groundwater restoration, waste water recycling and water for fish and wildlife.

"ACWA represents hundreds of water agencies throughout California, and is certainly the most influential water organization in the state," Meral said in an email. "Their endorsement gives the signal to local water agencies that this measure is highly beneficial to water conservation, development and management in California."

The proposal comes as the California Water Commission is considering 12 applications for portions of \$2.5 billion in Proposition 1 funding for storage projects. The commission expects to make final determinations in June 2018.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press File
Strawberries from Irvine, Calif.-based Orange County Produce. This year's California strawberry production has eclipsed last year's record-setting crop.

California strawberry production already tops 2016 total

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

WATSONVILLE, Calif. — With a month to go in the year, California strawberry production in 2017 has already surpassed last year's record total.

Growers and their crews had brought in 197.3 million crates statewide as of mid-November, topping the 196.8 million crates produced in all of 2016, the California Strawberry Commission reported.

The boom came despite one of the wettest winters on record in 2016-17 and summer heat waves inland.

"Part of it is definitely due to having the rain," commission spokeswoman Carolyn O'Donnell said. "Rain was a good thing for the plants. It helped to rinse away some of the salts that have accumulated in the top layer of soil in recent years ... and contributed to overall plant health."

Another factor in the higher yields was that growers are moving to newer varieties, O'Donnell said. Growers were expected to plant 36,141 acres of strawberries in 2017, down from 40,816 in 2013, according to the commission.

Strawberries are a year-round fruit in California, with harvests following the sun. During the peak season, all of the state's major growing regions — around Oxnard, Santa Maria and Watsonville — are producing berries. The peak is typically in the spring and early summer, but it came later this year because of the spring rains.

Production is trending upward again after several years of modest declines coincided with the recent five-year drought. The rebound is good news for growers, as global demand for strawberries is already increasing.



Kelly Hamby

UC-Davis alumna wins national award for research, extension efforts

DAVIS, Calif. — A University of California-Davis alumna received the Early Career Professional Extension Award during the Entomological Society of America's annual meeting earlier this month in Denver.

Kelly Hamby, who received her bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in entomology at UC-Davis and is now an assistant professor and specialist at the University of Maryland, was honored during a breakfast program.

The Entomological Society credited Hamby's research for addressing invasive and emerging insect pest issues, evaluating and improving pest management programs and developing alternative management tactics, according to a news release.

The award was only the latest for Hamby, who also won the John Henry Comstock Award for research from the society's Pacific Branch while at UC-Davis.

CDFA extends vote on dairy quota program



Tim Hearden/Capital Press File

The California Department of Food and Agriculture has extended until Dec. 22 the deadline for dairy farmers to vote on the referendum for the state's new Quota Implementation Program.

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

The California Department of Food and Agriculture has extended until Dec. 22 the deadline for the state's dairy farmers to vote on the referendum for the Quota Implementation Program. The original deadline was Dec. 4.

In a notice to industry, the department stated the extension is to give producers an adequate opportunity to vote and is due to the disruption caused by recent wildfires.

The department earlier mailed 1,054 ballots and had received 400 as of earlier this week.

If approved, the QIP would continue the long-standing program that pays quota holders \$1.70 per hundredweight of milk above the state blend price. It has operated within the state's milk marketing order since the order was established

in the late 1960s.

The state's producers are seeking to join the federal marketing order system, which does not include quota programs. They have been adamant that quota value must be maintained if they join the federal system.

A provision in the last farm bill and USDA will allow the state to administer a stand-alone program. A producer review developed the program this summer, and it was finalized by CDFA in September and put to a referendum.

If approved by dairy farmers, the stand-alone program would only go into effect if producers also vote to join the federal order system.

The quota program came about as a means of compensating milk producers selling into the higher Class I market and gain their support for establishing a state marketing order, which would pool milk and

distribute payments more evenly to producers of milk across all utilizations.

Quota certificates are worth \$1.2 billion today and are considered an asset that can be transferred or sold.

The producer-developed stand-alone program would assess all Grade A milk in the state at no more than 38 cents per hundredweight to generate about \$12 million a month needed to fund the quota.

The first requirement if QIP is to pass is that at least 51 percent of eligible producers must vote. The 400 ballots received by CDFA constitute only 38 percent.

Beyond that, votes in favor must be submitted by at least 65 percent of those who voted and produce at least 51 percent of the milk (by those who voted) or 51 percent of those who voted and produce at least 65 percent of the milk produced (by those who voted).

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