

http://www.contracostatimes.com/breaking-news/ci_28424534/california-c

California Congressman unveils plans for 27 new recycled water projects, calls for federal funding

By Nate Gartrell ngartrell@bayareanewsgroup.com

POSTED: 07/02/2015 03:55:11 PM PDT

ANTIOCH -- Citing concerns over statewide water shortages and recent proposed legislation that "panders to South Valley water users," Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Stockton, announced Thursday that he will introduce legislation to seek federal funding for 27 recycled water projects, all but six of which are based in the Bay Area.

"It's a real crisis; we're seeing our worst drought in recorded history, as far as I understand," McNerney said Thursday during a news conference at Delta Diablo, an Antioch water treatment facility. "And California's coming up with solutions."

The proposed projects, which span as far south as Fresno and as far north as Yountville, are being put forth by the Western Recycled Water Coalition, a group of water agencies that was formed in 2009 to seek funding for water-related projects.



Delta Diablo Operations Manager Joaquin Gonzalez, left, Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Stockton), third from left, Pittsburg Mayor Pete Longmire, fourth from left, and Antioch Mayor Wade Harper examine stored water at Delta Diablo's treatment plant July 2, 2015 in Antioch. The water has been recycled and is ready to be used for irrigation. (Nate Gartrell/Bay Area News Group)

The projects, if approved, will collectively cost an estimated \$717 million, but due to limits on federal spending for local projects, the U.S. government can only provide \$178 million, or a quarter of the total costs, said Delta Diablo government affairs manager Jayne Strommer.

In recent months, Delta Diablo board members have lobbied Washington to fund recycled water projects, said Pittsburg Mayor Pete Longmire, a Delta Diablo board member who was on hand for the announcement. To pay for the rest of the costs, the coalition will seek funding from state grants and loan programs, and will apply for money through Proposition 1, a water bond measure passed last year that allocates \$7.5 billion for water-related projects, said Delta Diablo General Manager Gary Darling.

If federal funding is secured, McNerney said, he's confident the coalition's agencies will have a better "leg to stand on" to acquire other funding sources.

Recycled water is treated from wastewater inflow and sanitized to the point where it is still nonpotable but safe to use for irrigation. In response to the drought, state officials have shown more of a willingness to approve such projects in recent years, Darling said.

"The governor is very focused on water, always has been, and one of his appointees to the state water resources control board, Felicia Marcus, has turned things around, in my opinion," Darling said. "In terms of opening up dollars and being available for recycled water, water conservation and storage, she has turned the State Water Resources Control Board into a much more supportive role."

Looking beyond the money, McNerney's announcement also brought up the subject of local control, an issue that has defined California's infamous "water wars" for decades. In East Contra Costa, treated wastewater that is not used for recycled water irrigation is typically sent back into the Delta, where it can end up being sent down to Southern California. By contrast, if it's used for recycled water irrigation, local ratepayers in Northern California would get the benefit of the water.

McNerney said he was "disappointed" with a recent bill, written by House Republicans, that would remove certain restrictions on water exports from the Delta and also limit the secretary of agriculture's ability to restrict farmers' water rights throughout the state.

"It's a recycled version of a bill that would actually call to ship more fresh water out of the Delta to points in Southern California without any regard for the environment of the Delta, for the endangered species, for water quality," McNerney said of the proposed legislation. "They just want more water, and that's not a solution. ... We need to come up with a solution that works for everybody."

This drought affects each and every one of us, and this is a team effort," Longmire said. "We have to continuously keep that in the forefront of our mind, because our most precious resource is going away."

Contact Nate Gartrell at 925-779-7174 or follow him on Twitter at [Twitter.com/NateGartrell](https://twitter.com/NateGartrell)

The 27 Proposed Projects: Benicia recycled water project to Valero refinery
Brentwood recycled water project
Central Dublin recycled water distribution and retrofit project
Central Redwood City recycled water project
Concord recycled water project
Contra Costa County refinery recycled water project, Phase 1
Delta Diablo recycled water project
Delta Diablo high-purity water treatment facility
Dublin recycled water expansion project
Fresno east central recycled water facility
Fresno downtown recycled water distribution
Fresno southwest recycled water distribution
Hayward recycled water project
Ironhouse Sanitary District Cypress recycled water project
Ironhouse Sanitary District industrial recycled water project

Ironhouse Sanitary District direct potable reuse project
Monterey Peninsula groundwater replenishment project, Phase 1
Mountain View recycled water project.
North Valley regional recycled water project
Palo Alto recycled water pipeline project
Pleasanton recycled water project
Potable Reuse in Santa Clara County, Phase 1
San Jose Water Co. recycled water project
Sunnyvale continuous recycled water production project
West Bay Sanitary District Recycled Water Project
Wolfe Road recycled water project
Yountville recycled water project