

# *Santa Ynez River*

WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## JULY 2019 NEWSLETTER

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### New Leadership

After 24 years of service, Bruce Wales has retired. Much was accomplished to protect your water rights under his direction and leadership. Following a comprehensive search, the Board of Directors of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District (SYRWCD or the District) selected Kevin Walsh as its new General Manager. Mr. Walsh has worked for several water districts in California. Most recently he served as the President of Improvement District No. 1 Board of Trustees, a position from which he resigned to accept the General Manager assignment at the District.

### www.SYRWCD.com

The District's website is now up and running. There you can find the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Engineering and Survey Report on Water Supply Conditions of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District 2018-2019 (dated April 25, 2019), Semi-Annual Groundwater Production reporting forms, Agendas and Minutes for Board Meetings, Newsletters as well as other news and information.



Detroit Photographic Co. *California. Fording the Santa Inez River.* California Santa Ynez River United States, None. [Between 1898 and 1905] [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress

### Protecting Your Water Rights

In 1939, the SYRWCD was formed by residents of the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys in response to a third large dam to be constructed on the Santa Ynez River designed to store and divert river-flow out of the watershed to the communities of the South Coast. At that time, residents were concerned about preserving and protecting water-rights and the future uses of water within the Santa Ynez watershed.

Since 1939 and continuing today, SYRWCD has been an assertive protector of water rights in the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys. We are your advocate for your water rights.

District water-users should not confuse this District with the Improvement District No. 1 (ID No. 1) by the same

name. ID No. 1 is a separate District formed many years ago to acquire and serve water in the Los Olivos, Santa Ynez and Solvang areas.

### Managing Water Supplies for User Benefit

Cachuma Reservoir last spilled in 2011. During spill years, aquifers along the river are recharged. During dry periods, such as the 8 years since that last spill, SYRWCD may make Water-Rights Releases of stored water from the reservoir that are earmarked for water users below Bradbury Dam. Water-Rights Releases have occurred six times since 2011 totaling over 64K acre-feet of water to downstream users. As the aquifers are still at low levels due to prolonged drought conditions, another Water-Rights Release is being considered for this summer to recharge all reaches of the Santa Ynez River including the Lompoc Plain.

### Is the Drought Over?

While this winter's rainfall contributed significant inflow to Lake Cachuma, it is about 10-feet short of filling. Regardless of drought status, the Lompoc Plain and other groundwater sub-basins are still suffering with the results of lowered water levels due to the 8-year drought. Groundwater basins recover much slower than surface water reservoirs. Recovery to pre-drought levels will take many years of above-average rainfall.

### Groundwater Pump Charge Rates

There will be no change to the Groundwater Pump Charge Rates for the 2019-20 fiscal year. All rates in all zones will remain the same as they were during the 2018-19 fiscal year:

Agricultural Water:	\$ 7.15 / Acre-Foot
Special Irrigation:	\$14.30 / Acre-Foot
Other Water:	\$25.00 / Acre-Foot

### Protecting Water Rights & the Environment

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) is proposing changes to their previous permits which allows for the diversion of water out of the Basin. The new proposed changes require significantly more water to be released to promote recovery of the endangered sea-going rainbow trout, also known as Steelhead. While at first it may seem that such releases would mean more water is available for all users, in actuality there could be less. The proposed changes would have releases done at the wrong time of year and in the wrong amounts to be beneficial to all users. The State Board is required to balance the often-competing interests of water for fish

and water for people. However, the United States National Marine Fisheries Service, the agency responsible for protecting the steelhead, has no such requirement. SYRWCD has been involved in this process for many years and will continue the cooperative effort with all State and Federal agencies to work toward a balance of water resource allocations and to ensure that downstream water rights are not infringed upon.

**Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)**

Passed by the California Legislature and signed by Governor Jerry Brown, SGMA became effective January 2015. The purpose of SGMA is to assure the “management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.” Governments and water agencies of medium priority basins, such as ours, are required to halt overdraft and bring groundwater basins into balanced levels of pumping and recharge.

For the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin, there is an ongoing four-year \$3 million effort to prepare a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). This plan will be implemented by 2022 to comply with SGMA requirements that the basin achieve sustainability by the 2042 deadline. Funding for the Plan has come from a \$1 million State of California Prop. 1 Grant, a \$1 million contribution from the County of Santa Barbara, and shared contributions from Cities of Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang, both SYRWCD and ID No. 1, and the Mission Hills and Vandenberg Village Community Services Districts. SYRWCD has assumed the primary coordinating role for this endeavor.

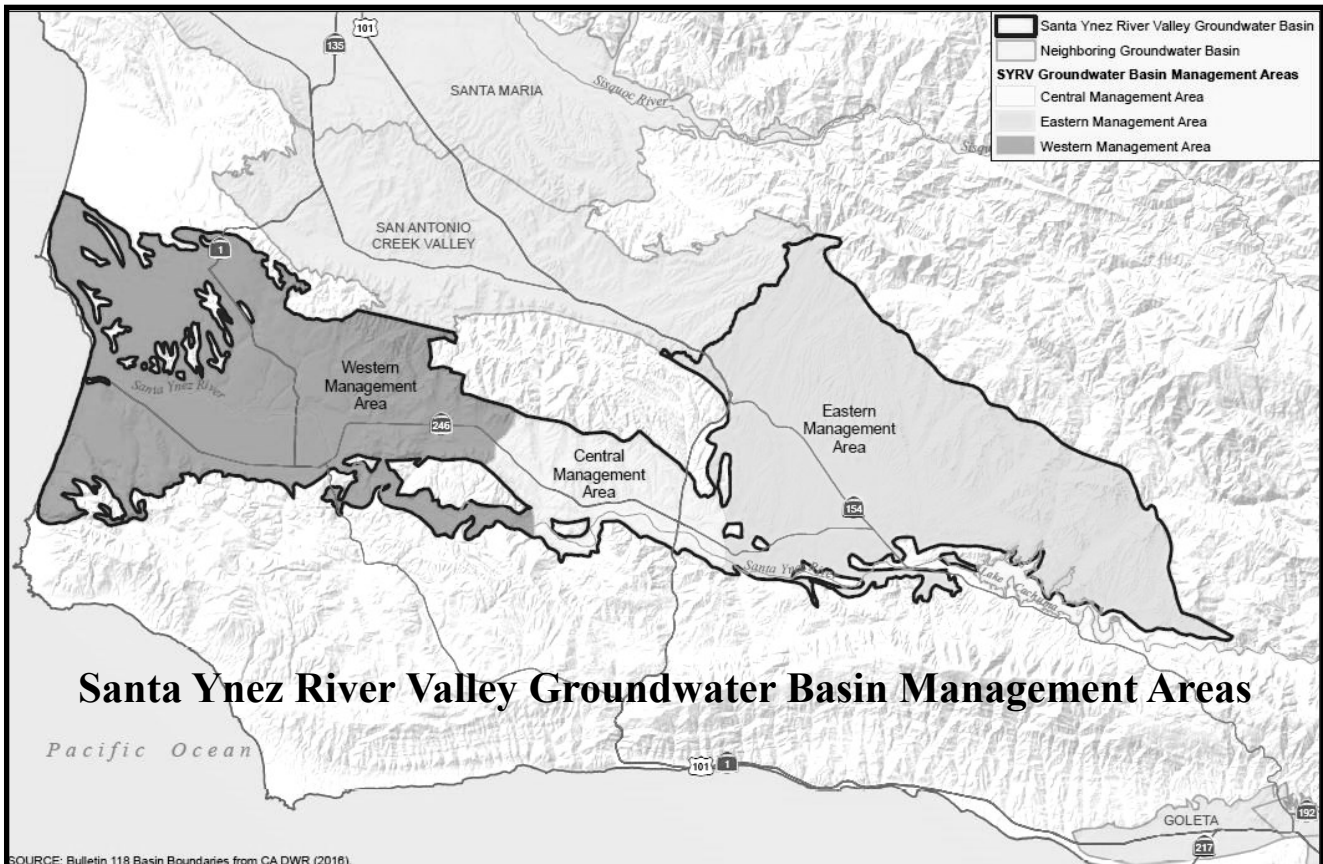
Based on the hydrology and geology of the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys, the watershed has been divided into three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). Known as the Eastern Management Area, Central Management Area, and Western Management Area GSAs, they approximately correspond to the Los Olivos/Santa Ynez/Solvang area (Eastern), the Buellton Area (Central), and the Lompoc area (Western). The primary purpose of each GSA is to develop and implement a GSP in their respective areas to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability.

SGMA requires comprehensive stakeholder and interested party involvement in the development and implementation of the GSPs. With the planning effort is well underway, each of the three GSAs is in the process of forming Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs). The initial formation of these citizen groups began in May 2019 and is expected to be completed by August 2019. If you are interested in learning more about the CAGs, please contact Bill Buelow at 805-693-1156 or go to [www.SYRWCD.com](http://www.SYRWCD.com).

**Newsletter Distribution**

This Newsletter is sent semi-annually with the Groundwater Production Statements. Please distribute it within your organization. Understanding the challenges we face in protecting your water rights and supplies is important to everyone.

*We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have. If you have any questions regarding District activities, please contact Kevin Walsh, General Manager, at 805-693-1156.*



SOURCE: Bulletin 118 Basin Boundaries from CA DWR (2016).