

## **Butte Environmental Council Seeks Court Involvement in Protecting Area Ground Water**

**For immediate release: September 12, 2007**

(Chico, CA) – Butte Environmental Council (BEC) has challenged Glenn Colusa Irrigation District's (GCID) project that it claims is exempt from environmental review. The proposed project will install more wells into the deep portions of the aquifer underlying Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties to test their capacity to extract ground water.

GCID is using public money to expand its role in water marketing. The current project is part of a much larger set of plans to "integrate" ground water into the state water supply. GCID has been pursuing these plans for many years. While speculators are allowed to propose myriad types of projects in California, the law requires that they analyze the potential impacts and mitigate them through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). BEC's Executive Director, Barbara Vlamis, concludes that, "GCID chose to skirt the hard analysis required by CEQA by trying to assert that it is only seeking information from a research project, completely obfuscating its focus on water exports as noted in numerous documents."

- Sacramento Valley Water Management Agreement (Phase 8, October 2001).
- Estimating the Potential for In Lieu Conjunctive Water Management in the Central Valley of California (2002). R
- Regional Integration of the Lower Tuscan Formation Using Conjunctive Water Management in the Sacramento Valley Regional Integration of the Lower Tuscan Groundwater Formation into the Sacramento Valley Surface Water System Through Conjunctive Water Management (June 2005).
- Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (2006).

GCID's proposed project will extract a volume of ground water that approaches or exceeds the current utilization by the city of Chico, creating the likelihood of a significant adverse environmental impact. BEC requests that the Glenn County Superior Court require the preparation of an environmental impact report by a more appropriate lead agency and that all activities surrounding the project are halted.

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### **Water Facts**

- The vast majority (87%) of Butte County residents depend on ground water for their drinking water
- The Tuscan Formation aquifer, which underlies Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties holds approximately 30 million acre feet (AF) of water (an acre foot is 325,900 gallons of water).
- Los Angeles' Metropolitan Water District is looking for 300,000 AF from the Sacramento Valley by 2010 and 550,000 AF by 2020.
- Glenn Colusa Irrigation District and its partners have been funded by the State of California to explore selling ground water from the aquifer.

- In 1994, 105,000 acre-feet of water were sold from Butte County. Individual wells ran dry, one Durham community well was forced to close, hoses ran between neighbors' houses for water emergencies, people unwittingly drank polluted water before their wells dried up, and one family lost part of their farm from the impacts.
- There is currently no real protection for Butte County's ground water
- The San Joaquin River is already dewatered in its upper reaches from excess water consumption and a significant portion of the San Joaquin ground water basin has been subsiding.
- The amount of energy currently devoted to pumping water over the Tehachapi mountain range from northern to southern California is equal to one third of the entire household energy use of southern California