

Butte Environmental Council Challenges Butte County Plan Approval

For immediate release: December 21, 2007

Protection of Local Ground Water Paramount!

Court Petition Filed November 2, 2007

(Chico, CA) – Butte Environmental Council (BEC) has challenged Butte County’s approval of the Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (Plan) without supporting environmental review. The Plan was created in nine months with extremely limited public involvement in an attempt to secure funding for 60 production wells that will extract water from the lower Tuscan aquifer to meet water demands elsewhere. The Plan also supports raising Shasta dam and building Sites Reservoir in Colusa County.

When the County passed their approval May 22, 2007, so they could receive funding for two production wells and repairs for the Magalia dam, they tempered their approval with numerous caveats through which they asserted their intent to preserve the integrity of the groundwater resources of the County. While expressing concern, the Supervisors gave no indication that such caveats will, or have been to date, incorporated into the contractual framework governing the receipt and use of the funding.

The County’s approval of the Plan sets in motion efforts to utilize massive quantities of local groundwater for the state water supply. 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. Barbara Vlamis, BEC’s Executive Director asserts that, “Butte County is participating in a Plan that could destroy the local economy and environment and has avoided the environmental review that would at least lay bare the consequences and allow for intense public input.”

A settlement discussion on December 19, 2007 produced no results, but the parties agreed to meet one more time in January to see if an out of court agreement could be reached.

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