



# VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE

Nonprofit 501(c)3 Organization

Our Mission is to Educate and Build Alliances to protect our uniquely productive California Central Valley Farmland.

## INSIDE

- Accentuate the Positive!
- Water is Life (but whose life?)
- VLA in Action
- Item 16 on Merced County Board of Supervisors Meeting Agenda for December 5, 2023
- Merced City: Housing
- WE ARE WATCHING

Accentuate the Positive!  
By Jean Okuye, President

For years I have subscribed to The County Times in Merced County. This is a weekly publication I get, similar to another weekly newspaper that comes to my mailbox, The Sun Gazette. I was turned on to The Sun Gazette when I read an article quoting Trudy Wischemann, a columnist who writes articles on water and soil **accentuating the positive** in their reporting of events, but also giving insight to concerns. In this newsletter, you will find one of Trudy Wischemann's articles about water concerns. Trudy is a 40-year veteran in the struggle to save family farms. You can send her your visions of justice to c/o PO Box 137, Lindsay, CA 93247.

May we be positive in protecting our world. We have choices.

Cheers,  
Jean



## WATER IS LIFE (but whose life?)

*Should water be a commodity bought and sold?*

**California Water:** California has been allocating water for new agricultural, urban development and infrastructure projects without knowing how much is available from nature.

C-WIN and UC Davis have researched the true amount of water available and determined the State has contracted 5.5 times more than actually available. This is known as paper water. Under the secret Monterey deal in 1994, the State agreed to eliminate drought protections for urban areas (throwing out Article 18(a), encouraging "paper water" and to give away the Kern Water Bank to local interests.

To learn more about Kern Water Bank check out Forbes' article about Resnicks owning 57% of water rights in Kern Water Bank, a 32 sq mile area.

*“With ground sinking and wells going dry, many people are affected.  
Stop, in the name of love for sustainability...”*

## VLA IN ACTION: OUR RESPONSE TO MERCED COUNTY SUPERVISORS REGARDING EXPORTING OF WATER

December 4, 2023

Merced County Board of Supervisors  
2222 M Street  
Merced, CA 95340

**Re: Opposition to Merced County Groundwater Ordinance Changes**

Dear Sir/Madam:

We understand that the Merced County Board of Supervisors desires to provide farmers with tools to comply with SGMA, however, as proposed, Merced County is abandoning safeguards that are currently in place. The export policy needs to work for all export, whether its one mile away, or ten miles away, and whether the export is one acre-foot, or 100 acre-feet.

Yes, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) have developed and are implementing their plans, but groundwater conditions are not better today than they were in 2015.

An entire groundwater basin shares the same water. Two GSAs should not be allowed to make decisions that negatively impact landowners outside of their boundaries. With the amendment, Merced County would be allowing GSAs, where I have no representation, to adopt export policies that affect my groundwater rights, supply and livelihood.

We strongly urge the Merced County Board of Supervisors to not adopt the amendments to the Merced County Groundwater Ordinance as proposed. It's a dangerous change, until all details for safeguards are worked out.

Sincerely,

Jean Okuye, President

Board of Directors

Valley Land Alliance

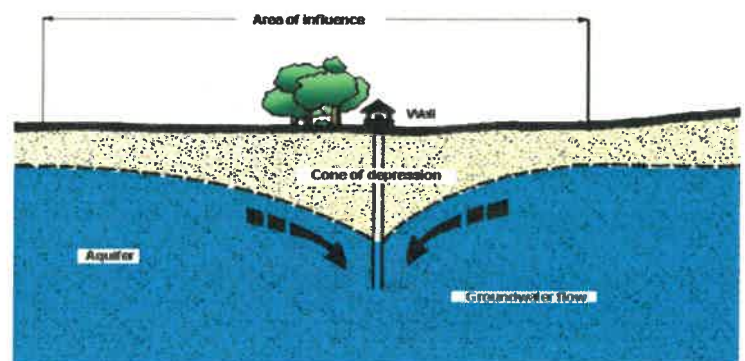
PO Box 102

Cressey, Ca 95312



Introduced on Nov 28, 2023 at the Merced County BOS meeting, “**An Ordinance Relating to Groundwater Mining and Export.**” One week later, on Dec. 5, 2023, The BOS had another meeting with this on the agenda, Item 16: **“Find adoption of the proposed ordinance is exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to section 15061 of the CEQA Guidelines, 2) Adopt an ordinance introduced on November 28, 2023, entitled “An Ordinance Relating to Groundwater Mining and Export.”**”

VLA Opposition Letter to  
December 5, 2023 Agenda Item



**All people in this water basin will be affected by any water exported. For now no action; however, this will be up for vote on Jan 23, 2024 again. For more information contact us and let your supervisor know your concern!**

## WE ARE WATCHING

We are not alone:

Land Allies Need support letter from VLA request by Trudy Wischemann:

**Two grassroots citizen groups could use support from Valley Land Alliance: Stand With Cuyama and Groundwater For Butte.** Both are currently fighting to maintain local control over their groundwater reserves and thus their land. Those interested in preserving agricultural land will benefit from learning about these two groups' efforts.



**Stand With Cuyama.** In Cuyama Valley, two absentee corporations have filed a lawsuit against all resident landowners for an adjudication of groundwater rights. These corporations (Grimmway and Bolthouse) farm carrots, a water-intensive crop in a region with no surface water supply. Under threat of losing their water rights and incurring enormous legal fees, the residents have called a carrot boycott. Visit [www.standwithcuyama.com](http://www.standwithcuyama.com) for a concise portrayal of the issue and to sign their petition.

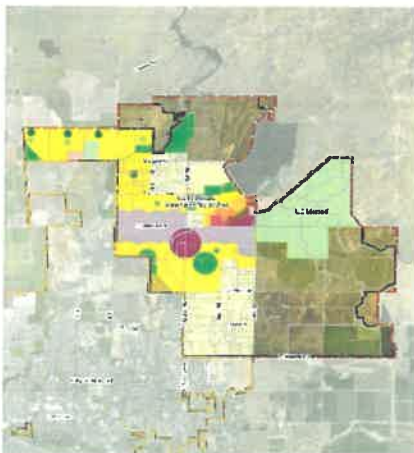
Source [www.standwithcuyama.com](http://www.standwithcuyama.com)

**“Divide and rule, the politician cries; unite and lead, is watchword of the wise.” - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**



**Groundwater for Butte.** For 2 years G4B has fought off the formation of a water district (Tuscan) instigated by six large, mostly absentee landowners. This district, with property-weighted voting and gerrymandered boundaries, threatens to overtake local groundwater management groups. Most of Butte County's surface water is exported to the southern half of the state, so groundwater reserves are critical for maintaining smaller farm communities and wildlands. See <https://groundwaterforbutte.blogspot.com> for details and an exacting overview.

Source <http://groundwaterforbutte.blogspot.com>



## HOW FAR AHEAD SHOULD MERCED CITY CONSIDER ANNEXATION PRE-APPLICATION FOR DEVELOPMENTS? HOUSING:

University Vista	4,176 units
Branford	589
Yosemite Lake Estates (partially not in City's sphere of influence)	3,414
Virginia Smith Trust	3,857
	12,036 Units

Necessary: 2.85 ml gal/day sewer capacity, 3.83 ml gal/day water.

NOW in the pipeline ready for builders and buyers:

Bellevue Ranch Specific and remaining portions of Bellevue Ranch Plan north of Bellevue Rd., East side G Street part of Bellevue Corridor Community Plan, others?



## Thank you for your support!

We wish to thank all of you who have supported us with your memberships and contributions which allow us to educate people and policy-makers in our community. VLA is grateful for the support from the John & Nancy Cassidy Family Foundation, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

# Export Our Groundwater??

**Not so fast! Protect our water supply!**

Merced County Board of Supervisors  
Votes January 23rd, 2023

Our Groundwater is Critically Overdrafted



## Protect our water

**Contact your Supervisor:** (209) 385-7366  
District 1: [Rodrigo.Espinosa@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Rodrigo.Espinosa@countyofmerced.com)  
District 2: [Josh.Pedrozo@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Josh.Pedrozo@countyofmerced.com)  
District 3: [Daron.McDaniel@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Daron.McDaniel@countyofmerced.com)  
District 4: [Lloyd.Pareira@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Lloyd.Pareira@countyofmerced.com)  
District 5: [Scott.Silveira@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Scott.Silveira@countyofmerced.com)

# URGENT!



## Speak up, call your supervisor!

*If you'd also like to be a donor fill out the form below. No gift is too large or too small.*

Valley Land Alliance  
PO Box 102  
Cressey, CA 95312  
[valleylandalliance.org](http://valleylandalliance.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Donation: \$100\_\_\_ \$50\_\_\_ \$25\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you wish to remain anonymous

Place Stamp  
Here