

PRESS RELEASE—LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BUTTE COUNTY, 10/09/08

At the September 8, 2008 Butte County General Plan 2030 Public Workshop, at the Southside Center in Oroville, the League of Women Voters of Butte County presented some important proposed content for the new general plan's water element. A copy of the League's cover letter and a copy of the proposed content are attached.

Some of the major provisions are:

The League proposal strengthens the basin management approach to groundwater management.

Under current policy there is no legal remedy should someone over-pump ground water beyond annual safe levels. The proposed content would require the Board of Supervisors to establish provisions for exercising corrective or mitigation measures under circumstances specified as deleterious to a sustainable, high quality groundwater supply.

The League proposal includes a new initiative for cooperation with local agencies and groups to ensure local groundwater consumption does not exceed local aquifer capacity.

Under current policy there is no process for comparing future water needs against future water supplies. The proposed content would require the Board of Supervisors to develop such a process in coordination with user and supplier organizations, environmental organizations, and municipalities.

The League proposal strengthens the permit process for groundwater export or substitution of groundwater for exported surface water.

Under current policy a potential water exporter assesses the impact on his neighbors of exporting water from the County. The proposed content would require an independent assessment of third-party impact.

Under current policy there is no mandatory mitigation of third-party impacts by a water exporter. The proposed content would require full mitigation based on the required independent analysis.

Under current policy it is possible for water to be approved for export from Butte County by the unelected Water Commission, without involvement by the Board of Supervisors. The proposed content would require Board involvement and would require specific Board findings related to the welfare of the County as a precondition for approval of a water transfer.

The League proposal establishes a connection between future development and future water availability.

While State law requires an assessment of water availability for large developments typical of more populous areas in the State, there is no local policy that would protect current local users from increased water consumption by new developments. The proposed content would rectify that shortcoming.

