

# Water bond proposal uncertain for November ballot

## *Governor urges legislators to push back proposal*

**Melissa Murphy, Vacaville Reporter, 7-20-10**

Hoping for a better election climate, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is still urging legislators to push back a contentious water bond proposal to 2012.

As it stands, the \$11.1 billion bond package, known as the Safe, Clean and Reliable Drinking Water Act of 2010, is scheduled to appear on the Nov. 2 ballot as Proposition 18.

Although there has been a push from Schwarzenegger to have the measure pulled, "it's not a done deal," said Alicia Trost, press secretary for Sen. President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento.

Removing the proposition from the November ballot would require a two-thirds vote from the state Legislature, which doesn't return to session until Aug. 2. The change would have to be introduced and approved by Aug. 31 to remove the bond from the ballot.

If Proposition 18 passes, the interest on the 30-year, \$11.1 billion bond, would be from \$600 million to \$1 billion annually, threatening to push the portion of the state's general fund dedicated to debt service to nearly 10 percent, said Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Solano.

"The bond itself is completely financially irresponsible," she added at a Solano Economic Development Corporation last month. "I oppose the package. It doesn't get to the heart of the issue. The Delta has done far too many things for the state."

The \$11 billion water bond includes about \$2 billion in earmarks for projects, reportedly in order to win votes needed to pass the plan out of the Legislature.

Some of those projects include \$40 million to educate the public about California's water; \$100 million for a Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program for watershed restoration, bike trails public access, and recreation projects; and \$20 million for the Baldwin Hills Conservancy to buy more land.

The conservancy is near the home of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass.

Still, Wolk emphasized that the state hasn't done a good job of protecting water and should reduce its reliance on the Delta.

She added that the proposed multimillion dollar projects for the Delta would require only counties adjacent to the water source to pay half of the cost.

"This bond is fiscally irresponsible and it won't get better with age," she said in a prepared statement. "It's not fine wine. It's just pork. It is fiscal madness to contemplate passing the largest water bond in California history at the same time that we are in the midst of an economic crisis. We are in the deepest budget hole in state history. It's time to stop digging. We should start over next year with a new Legislature, a new governor, and an open and transparent public process."