

# California has no future without sustainable water

**Todd Fitchette, Western Farm Press, 1-8-15**

It only took several years and before it was done several billion dollars were shaved off the top because the Governor believed it was too expensive.

Late in the previous California legislative session, lawmakers got together in small-groups and, together with negotiations with Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr., and his staff, hammered out an agreement that eventually became Proposition 1 – the water bond.

California voters passed the \$7.5 billion measure in November, paving the way for a host of projects aimed at rebuilding California's broken water system. Included in that is \$2.5 billion for water storage.

The measure replaced an \$11-plus billion measure approved for the ballot when Gov. Schwarzenegger was California's chief executive, but Brown called that "irresponsible" and "too expensive" and promised to use his political might to oppose it should the measure ever return to the state ballot. The governor actually sounded like a political conservative.

Meanwhile, in early January, Gov. Brown, in an invitation-only event in Fresno, pulled the whistle to start California's High Speed Rail (HSR) process, a measure that by any estimation will make the California water bond look like pocket change. It's likely the entire water bond will cost less than 10 percent what the high speed rail project will wind up costing California taxpayers, yet the governor says it's an investment in California's future.

I disagree. California has no future without sustainable supplies of water.

While the technology may be there for a train to zoom over relatively flat farmland that is subsiding because the aquifers underneath are over drafted, getting the train up and over the mountains between Bakersfield and Los Angeles at anything over crawl-speed will be a challenge.

The claim that Los Angeles and San Francisco need to be linked with a speedy mode of transportation neglects to consider that they are already connected by countless direct flights that do it much quicker and with no impact to the farms they fly over.

By most published estimates the cost of California's high speed rail will be \$68 billion. At one public hearing in Fresno it became apparent that the figure was just Phase One of the project and that conservative cost over-runs and full build-out could double the price.

California has a multitude of problems. Most pressing is its water infrastructure which has not been upgraded.

Without water, urban users will continue to have to cut back and farmers will simply be told to do without.

The idea that California can't afford to expend the capital and political will on something as life-sustaining as water, while moving ahead with high speed rail, is wrong.