

Lawmaker looks at proposal to ship water from Alaska to parched California

Doyle Rice, USA Today, 10-14-15

A proposal to ship 9 billion of gallons of water a year from Alaska to drought-plagued California caught the eye of U.S. Rep. Janice Hahn, D-Calif., who calls it "an idea worth exploring."

After reading about the concept in USA TODAY in August, Hahn said she arranged an exploratory meeting last week with Alaska Bulk Water CEO Terry Trapp, several California water officials and representatives from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

California's drought is now in its fourth year and encompasses 97% of the state, leading to water shortages and wildfires.

Trapp said his plan would bring water by tanker ships from Blue Lake in Sitka, where his company has rights to up to 9 billion gallons per year of what he described as "some of the most pure water on Earth."

Hahn admitted to "sticker shock" when she saw Trapp's proposed price: 6 cents per gallon, compared to the 1/2-cent per gallon that water now costs in California. "It seems a little expensive at this point," she said in a phone interview with USA TODAY.

At that price, the Alaska water would cost California \$540 million a year.

Plus, there's the cost to build needed infrastructure at California's ports to offload and store the water, she said.

The 9 billion gallons supplied annually would be "only a drop in the bucket," enough for only about 70,000 of California's 12 million families, Hahn said. Another plan would bring in water for specific locations, such as the 4,000 residents of Catalina Island, she said.

"There's a lot of enthusiasm, but there's also clearly a lot of work," Trapp told the *Daily Breeze* newspaper after the meeting. Trapp's company already has a contract to ship 300 million gallons a year to Mexico.

Asked if the plan is too far-fetched, Hahn responded: "Residents of California want their decision-makers to explore ideas."